

ALL ABOUT 'VRATĀ' IN THE R̥GVEDA

BY

V. M. APTE

Professor W. D. Whitney wrote a note¹ 'On the Etymology of the Sanskrit noun *vratā*' which deserves to be quoted in full :—

As to the derivation of the common Sanskrit noun *vratā* (meaning in the classical language oftenest 'a sacred act' or 'vow'), and as to the way in which it arrives at its variety of senses, there exists considerable difference of opinion among scholars. The Petersburg lexicon makes it come from $\sqrt{2} vr$, 'choose,' and draws out its scheme of values as follows: "1. will, command, law, prescribed order; 2. subservience, obedience, service; 3. domain; 4. order, regulated succession, realm; 5. calling, office, customary activity, action, carrying on, custom, etc.; 6. religious duty, worship, obligation; 7. any undertaken religious or ascetic performance or observance, rule, vow, sacred work; 8. vow in general, fixed purpose;" and then certain specialized uses. Grassmann's treatment of the word (in his Rig-Veda dictionary) is essentially the same. Benfey, making the derivation from the same root, starts with the meaning "a (self-chosen) voluntary act, rule" and goes on to "action, doing," to "work" to "a devout act.....a vowed observance, a vow," and then to the more specialized senses; here, it will be seen the assumed fundamental signification is completely different from that of the other authorities already quoted. But F. M. Müller, in his so-called translation of the Rig-Veda (pp. 225-8), even takes *vratā* from another root, 1. \sqrt{vr} 'protect,' and holds it to "have meant originally what is enclosed, protected, set apart," then "what is fenced off, what is determined, what is settled,.....law, ordinance," and then to have "come to mean sway or power, and the expression *vratē tava* signifies, at thy command under thy auspices."

Since now, two of these explanations must be wrong, it is not impossible that all the three may be so; certainly, it stands open to any one to criticise them all, and to suggest a new explanation.

We are justified, I think, in the first place, in simply setting aside Müller's etymology as unsatisfactory; it lacks any fair degree of plausibility, and is also incompletely carried out: how its author would connect the usual later meaning of the word with those laid down by him, does not appear.

1. Proceedings of the American Oriental Society for October 1884, published in the JAOS. Vol. XI, pp. CCXXIX ff.

Against the etymology of the two authorities first quoted is to be urged that (see their own dictionaries) the root 2 *vr* does not signify willing, command, prescription, but only choice or preference; the idea of laying down the law, which runs through all their leading definitions, is by no means to be found in it. There is, to be sure, a certain relationship between 'choose' and 'command,' but it is not so close as to allow of simply substituting the latter for the former. Hence even if we admit the derivation from 2 *vr*, the Petersburg lexicon's scheme of definitions, as it now stands, must be pronounced unacceptable and requiring to be recast. Nor does the transition from law and ordinance to action, through the sense of prescribed activity and accustomed action, seem an easy or natural one.

The objection of non-correspondence with the proper meaning of the root is avoided by Benfey, who virtually starts from the sense of 'chosen activity, selected course of action,' and then simply drops the idea of choice or selection in the following senses. No such meaning as the former is recognized by any of the other authorities who have discussed the word; and if one examines the references given by Benfey under it, he will find that no implication of choice is at all called for by them; in fact, this author's leading definition is an otiose addition to his system of meanings, and made only for the purpose of forcing a connection between the real senses of the word and its assumed etymology.

My own idea of the word corresponds nearly with Benfey's, save that I would get rid of the forced implication of choice or selection by accepting a different etymology.

If we derive *vratā* from either root having the form *vr* we have to recognize in it the suffix *ta*, which, except as making the passive participle, is of great rarity; in fact, the only analogue to *vratā* would be *mārta* 'mortal,' from \sqrt{mr} 'die,' and this would show a difference both of accent and of root-form. Notably easier as regards the external shape of the word would be a derivation from \sqrt{vrt} 'proceed,' with suffix *a*; the form *vratā* instead of *varitā* is exceptional, but need cause no great difficulty, especially as it finds support in *vrajā*, *tradā*. The word *vratā* then, from *vrt* would mean something like a procedure, course, line of movement, course of action, then conduct or behaviour. This would correspond to meaning 5 in the Petersburg lexicon scheme, and 2 and 3 in Benfey's scheme. Then the developments of meaning would be on the one hand to a habitual, established, usual, or approved course of action or line of conduct—a familiar transfer, as instanced by *guṇa* 'virtue,' *rūpa* 'beauty,' and the like, and, on the other hand, to a special act

or series of acts or ceremonies of an obligatory character, imposed by morality or religion; and any other senses would be easily explained specializations of these. The whole sphere of significance of the word seems to me more naturally covered in this way than in any other. Even the phrase *vratē tāva* (of which Grassmann makes a final separate head, as if in doubt as to how it shall be connected with the rest) seems not less readily explained as meaning 'in thy (established or approved) course, following thy lead or example,' than 'under thy control or protection,' or 'in thy service,' as suggested by the other authorities.

The leading sense of 'course of action or behaviour' appears to me best to suit the great majority of the compounds with *vratā*, even in the Veda: e.g., *vivrata*, 'of discordant action,' *āpavrata* 'of offish or rebellious conduct,' *ānuvrata* 'of submissive behaviour,' *śucivrata* 'doing beauteous work,' *suvrata* 'of excellent conduct,' and so on. The commonest Rigveda compound, *dhṛtāvvrata*, admits of more than one interpretation, as from the leading or the developed sense.

There are passages here and there which appear to indicate a recognition of the etymological connection of *vratā* with root *vr̥t*: such are *vām ānu vratāni vartate* (RV. i. 183. 3); *ādityasya vratām anuparyāvantante* (AB. iii. 11). It would not however, be proper to insist too much upon their importance, since they might possibly be accidental collocations, or artificial plays upon words. But the general character of the verbs used along with such a noun has a legitimate and important value as pointing to its fundamental sense. And the verbs which take *vratā* as object decidedly favour its interpretation as a 'word of motion.' We do not find them to mean 'obey, submit to, accept,' and the like, but rather 'follow after, pursue, attach one's self to,' and so on (*i, anu-i, anu-car, anu-gā, anu-vrt, sac*, etc.). Examples are: *yāsya vratām paśavo yānti sārve* (AV. vii. 40. 1), *ānu vratām carasi* (RV. iii. 61. 1), *śśve...vratā padē'va saścire* (v. 67. 3), *tāva...vratām agne sacanta* (vii. 5. 4), *tām ṛjūyāntām ānu vratām* (i. 136. 5)—and many others might be quoted. The only notable exception is the root *mi* or, *mī* (alone, or more frequently, with prefixes *ā* or *pra*), and here the original meaning of the root is doubtful (its connection with Latin *minus* etc., usually accepted, is highly questionable), and the difficulty of explanation seems about as great with one understanding of *vratā* as with another.

If this account of *vratā* shall approve itself to acceptance, the hitherto assumed shade of meaning in sundry Vedic passages will be slightly modified, but their interpretation will not be essentially changed; since the matter involved is not so much the senses themselves of the word as their derivation and relation to one another.

In preparing this paper, the fact was overlooked that M. Bergaigne also, in his *Religion Vedique* (iii. 212 ff.), has treated of the history and use of the same word. He gives yet a fourth derivation, different from that of any of the three other authorities—making it come, indeed, like Müller, from the root 1 *vr̥*, but with the primary sense of ‘guard, protection.’ This appears not less unacceptable than the rest; and here, again, it may be said that M. Bergaigne’s learned and acute discussion of the uses of the word does not at all necessarily repose upon its etymology as held by him, but only upon prevalent senses of it, as to which all are agreed.

§ 2. In the following monograph, I have discussed every passage in the *R̥gVeda* in which the word *vrata* occurs, whether in its simple or compounded form (the total number of such passages being nearly 300) and set forth my own scheme of definitions for the word, a scheme which being materially different from those proposed so far, throws new light (in my opinion) on many a *vrata*—passage in the RV. I fully endorse Whitney’s view regarding the etymology of the noun *vrata*, viz. its derivation from the root *vr̥t*—to proceed, with the suffix *a*. Nay, I go further and maintain that the derivation from either 2 *vr̥* ‘choose’ (*vr̥ñte*) or from 1 *vr̥* (*vr̥ñoti*) whether with the sense of ‘guard, protection’ as M. Bergaigne² proposes or with the sense of ‘enclosure, setting apart, fencing off, or forbidding’ (*vārayate* means: he prohibits), as Max Müller³ does, is impossible. As regards 2 *vr̥* ‘choose’, not a single *vrata* passage in the RV. favours (as I shall show) the meaning ‘will, command, obedience or (fixed) purpose.’ In fact, the word *vrata* as denoting some kind of physical activity is, in the RV., *sharply distinguished from words denoting mental activity*’ such as *dhi* (in IX. 112. 1) and *cittā* (in X. 166. 4)! As for the root *vr̥* (*vr̥ñoti*), suffice it to say for the present, that the basic sense or idea underlying all the uses of *vrata* in the RV., is that of ‘turning, turning round, rolling, revolving, movement, passage, course, procedure, advance, march etc.’ *There is nowhere a suggestion of ‘prohibition, enclosure, confinement, restriction or determination’ but rather of ‘movement, expansion or extension.’* *Vrata*, in the RV. is not something ‘in itself protected’ but that (ritual or other) procedure or (religious or social) activity which, *in the course of its expansion*, requires protection (compare the compound word *vratapā*, protector or keeper of the *vratas*). Whitney is

2. *Religion Vedique*, iii. 212 ff.

3. *Vedic Hymns*: SBE. Vol. XXXII, 236 ff.

perfectly right when he says⁴ that the general character of the verbs used along with a noun has a legitimate and important value as pointing to its fundamental sense and that the verbs which take *vrata* as an object decidedly favour its interpretation as a 'word of motion.' After citing examples of verbs like *anu-car* which do not mean 'to obey, submit to, accept' and the like, but rather 'follow after, pursue' and so on, Whitney mentions (what according to him is) the only notable exception—the root *mi* or *mī* (alone or more frequently with prefixes *ā* or *pra*), the original meaning of which is according to him doubtful. I may however, draw attention to a passage (a RgVeda repetition) which decisively establishes the original character of that word as a verb of motion:—I. 124.3^{cd} = V. 80.4^{cd} *ṛtāsyā pānthām ānveti sādhu, prajānātiva nā dīso mināti* (meaning), ' (The Dawn when she appears clothed in light, in the east) follows carefully the path of *ṛtā* and like one who knows, does not miss (*nā mināti*) the directions.' There could be no doubt that *mi* or *mī* is here, a verb of motion having the primary sense 'to miss i. e. to deviate, wander or stray from' the (right) directions. This passage further shows that 'to violate, damage, harm, or reduce' are but secondary meanings of the verb.

§ 3. It is to be regretted that Prof. Whitney did not follow up the logical conclusions resulting from the etymology which he so brilliantly and convincingly proposed. The consequence is that he has not formulated a system of meanings for the word, which could properly and adequately cover all the uses of the word in its simple as well as compounded form. He puts forth the meaning 'procedure, course, line of movement, course of action,' then, 'conduct or behaviour,' the development of which (according to him) would be on the one hand to 'a habitual, established, usual or approved course of action or line of conduct' and on the other hand to 'a special act or series of acts or ceremonies of an obligatory character imposed by morality or religion.' When he says,⁵ however, that 'any other senses would be easily explained specializations of these' he is hardly right, in my opinion. There are serious gaps in his system of meanings. These omissions are due to the fact that he has not paid sufficient attention to the significance of the root *vyt* and its important shades of meanings. Thus the root *vyt* means not only 'to proceed' but also 'to turn, turn oneself, turn round, revolve, roll, move on, pass on' etc. Thus *vrata* should mean not only 'procedure, course, line of movement, course of action' and then 'conduct or

4. See his note quoted above.

5. loc. cit.

behaviour' but also 'turning round, revolution, circular movement, a round' etc. Secondly a missing link in Whitney's chain of meanings is the meaning 'route, circular path (like *gātú* a path, from $\sqrt{gā}$, 'to go') which is but a perfectly natural (nay, almost inevitable) development of the root-meaning, as will be shown hereafter.

§ 4. Generally speaking, scholars have not (in my view) taken sufficient notice of the very important part, this sense (*viz. route, circular path, etc.*) of the word *vrata*, plays in the *RgVeda* because the tendency is to be satisfied with the meanings 'will, law, statute, command, sacrifice, vow, fixed purpose, duty' etc., as far as possible. The fact has not been adequately appreciated that in the *vast majority of vrata-passages in the RgVeda*, it is the *vrata*s of the gods that are spoken of, rather than the *vrata*s of the human worshipper or poet. In my opinion, the numerous passages wherein the *RgVedic poets speak* of the *vrata*s of the gods, betray their vivid impression or reminiscences of the fixed luminous rounds or paths traced by the luminaries (*devās*) across the sky or in heaven and this is just what we should expect. The common name *deivos* (Skt. *deva-s*, Lith. *deva-s*, Lat. *deu-s*), god, shows that the conception of higher gods whose nature was connected with light (*div*, to shine), and heaven (*div*) had already been arrived at in the Indo-European period and was a vital force in the poetry at least of the *RgVedic age*. The *dāivya vrata* or *vrata*ni (the divine *vrata*s) so often mentioned in the *RgVeda* are rather the 'heavenly routes,' 'the divine rounds' 'the periodical movements across the sky' or 'the rules of the heavenly road,' closely adhered to, by the gods themselves rather than 'holy laws' enunciated or laid down by a particular deity and binding on its devotee! When, as often in the *RgVeda*, there is a reference to the missing of the *vrata*s of a god (Compare I. 25. 1), the *vrata*s are either such actually perceived periodical movements or regular appearances of a deity, like Agni, kindled on earth, like the Sun or Indra (after the winning of light and the Waters) or like Soma or the regular *i. e.* daily, monthly or seasonal visits or attendances of deities like Varuṇa at certain religious observances, ritual acts or sacrificial performances of human worshippers, which closely corresponded or were coordinated in the ancient calendar to such rounds or visits [Compare III. 32.5c: *sā ā varṣtsva haryaśva yajñāih* (meaning): 'As such (O Indra) Lord of bay steeds, turn hither by reason of (our) sacrifices.' Here *varṣtsva* (turn hither) is the 2 Sing. Pf. Imperative form of the very root *vr̥t*, from which *vrata* is derived].

§ 5. Finally, in (that comparatively small number of) passages where the *vrata*s of human beings are mentioned, the connotation of

the word embraces the following shades of meaning :—Line of behaviour, duty, profession, ordered (*physical*) activity, conventional conduct in the religious and social sphere. Thus, the connection of the word with its fundamental sense—its root-meaning, is never lost sight of. In these passages, the word not only symbolises the ethical ideal of the social and religious life of the ṚgVedic Aryans in general but also connotes the sum-total of the religious and social duties of each of the three higher classes of Aryan society in particular viz. *Brahmán* (or *Brāhmaṇā*), *Kṣatrá* (i. e. *Kṣatriya*, *rājanyā* or *rājan*) and *Viś* (*vaiśya*) and is, in a sense, the forerunner of the later words '*varṇa-dharma*' and '*jāti-dharma*', which became current with the hardening and elaboration of the Caste-system in India.

§ 6. I shall now formulate the scheme of definitions, the system of meanings which, *in my view*, is the most natural and rational and which I have arrived at, after a careful consideration of each and every *vrata*-passage in the ṚgVeda. Then will follow a discussion of the source-texts themselves on which my conclusions are based. Before I put forth the scheme, I must explain that there are two parallel phases of the semantic evolution of the word—phases, which for the sake of convenience, I may call the '*divine*' phase and the '*human*' phase. These are not necessarily separated in time and may have been concurrently developed, though it would not be far wrong to say that the '*divine*' phase is probably the earlier one. By '*divine*' phase, I mean the phase represented by the set of meanings which can be assigned to the word when it pertains to the gods (or *devās*) viz. *Uṣas*, *Sūrya*, *Aśvins*, *Pūṣan*, *Mitra*, *Varuṇa*, *Parjanya*, *Aditi*, *Dakṣa*, *Soma*, *Savitṛ*, *Viṣṇu*, the Rivers, *Indra* and *Agni*, individually or collectively as the *vratās* of the gods (*devānām* or *dāivyā*). As I have already pointed out, the fixed notion regarding *vrata* (derived from the classical language) that it is something like a particular vow undertaken or a holy law obeyed by a human devotee to propitiate a particular deity, has been the source of much confusion when read into Vedic, especially ṚgVedic literature. The '*human*' phase is seen in those passages where there is a mention of the *vrata* or *vratās* of men in general i. e. according to the ṚgVeda only those who are Aryan (the non-Aryans being described as *avratā*, *āpa-vrata* and *anyā-vrata*) and in such passages as speak specifically and separately of the *vratās* of the poet-priests, kings, patrons, or liberal chiefs and of the *viśah* (the Aryan masses as such).

§ 7. As in my view, the derivation of *vrata* from the root *vr̥t* is hardly in doubt, the root-meaning of the noun corresponding to the senses of the root enumerated above (in section 3) would naturally be :

The Scheme of
Definitions

I. *Turning, turning round, revolution, a round, rolling, movement, passage, course, procedure, running or flowing* (of the Rivers or of *Parjanya*), (physical) *activity* etc.

II. A most natural development of this meaning would be :— (Fixed) *passage, way, (circular) path, (settled) route, (beaten) track, or bed* (of Rivers or Waters), *area or sphere of rolling or expansion*, etc. From the root *vṛt*, we have primary nominal derivatives like *vṛtman* and *vartani*, with the meaning 'path or way' and all I maintain is that *vratā* is a similar derivative from the same root (formed with the suffix *a*) with exactly the same sense. Compare also the nouns *pāth* or *pāthi* (= path or way) which are supposed to have been derived from a postulated root *path* or *panth*, to go or the nouns *yāma* and *yāman* (= course or way) from $\sqrt{yā}$ to go. This tendency to derive from verbs of motion, a noun expressive of 'the way or path' over which that motion takes place, is not confined to Sanskrit only. To take but only one instance, the English word 'passage' means the 'act of passing' as well as the 'way by which persons or things may pass.' Once, therefore, the derivation of *vratā* from the root *vṛt* is accepted, the sense 'path or way' must be acknowledged to be a normal and inevitable development of the primary meaning 'turning, proceeding', etc. of the noun *vratā*.

III. A natural corollary to meaning No. II is the meaning :— The (entire) *area covered* [by the (regular) paths], the *sphere* (of movement or influence), the *region* (of activity), *prescribed dominion, realm, jurisdiction, auspices, province* etc. This sense suits particularly those passages wherein the word *vratā* is used in the singular.

IV. (Senses Nos. I and II, as it were, converge into the next viz.) *routine, career, law or laws of movement, periodical appearance* (in heaven) or *visit to the worshipper's home or sacrifice*⁶ *settled procedure, customary activity, prescribed behaviour* (expected) *deportment, recurring march or passage, (seasonal) journey* etc. This sense is more appropriate when the word *vratā* is used in the plural.

V. [As the passage or movement of the *devās* or heavenly luminaries across the sky (and the consequent possibility of their journey or visit to the worshipper's abode) was the result of the triumph of the powers of light over the forces of darkness, the next stage in the semantic evolution of the word is represented by the meaning] : (*triumphant*) *march or movement, (victorious) advance* or

6. Compare Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 18 : 'The gods in general, are described as driving luminous cars, nearly every individual deity being also said to possess one....In their cars, the gods are frequently represented as coming to *seat themselves on the layer of strewn grass at the sacrifice*' (italics mine).

activity, exploit ; performance, deed or act (of valour or strength) etc. It is evident that this meaning is *but the intensification of meaning No. 1 i. e. the root-meaning*. There are no separate illustrative source-texts for the root-meaning and none need be expected. A classical parallel would be *manasvin* (literally 'one with a mind') meaning 'One with a strong mind.'

VI. *Ordinance, arrangement, law of behaviour or rule or code of conduct* (laid down by a divinity). It will be seen, from the following discussion of source-texts, that this sense is suitable only in a very small number of passages (*only in three out of a total of more than 200 vrata passages*) and yet this sense has been held by a number of scholars to be the dominant, the principal significance of the word, suitable in the large majority of its uses in the RgVeda! The rendering 'law' or 'holy law' generally reserved for the word *vrata* is unfortunately so beautifully vague and so eminently non-committal that it escaped being challenged so far!

I. [In conformity with its root-meaning, the word has here also
 The Human Phase the sense] '*Physical*' activity (as distinguished
 from mental activity), practice, (expected)
 behaviour, duty, customary activity, (hence) profession, vocation.
 (It will be seen that this sense exactly corresponds to meaning IV of
 the so-called 'Divine' phase').

II. (On the socio-religious plane, the connotation is :) The sum-total of those peculiar ethical and religious duties and practices which made up the *culture-pattern of the Aryans i. e. the Aryan cult as such*.

III. (From this general sense, follows the particular one viz.) the specific (social and religious) *duties of each of the three upper classes of Aryan Society viz. the poet-priests, the patron-kings (i. e. the military or ruling class) and the visáh (or the Aryan masses)*. In this respect, *the word is the fore-runner of the later terms varṇa-dharma, jātidharma etc.*

IV. Devotion to Duty (in general) on the part of men and women.

§ 8. We shall now take up the discussion of the source-texts or the various *vrata-passages* scattered throughout the Rgveda (*the more important of them first*) classified under the different shades of the two phases of the semantic development of the word as pointed out

7. For facility of reference, we shall adopt here-after, abbreviations like D4,H1 etc., where D and H stand for the *Divine* and *Human* phases respectively, of the word *vrata*.

above. The translation of these passages is *mine* and is original, not only in the sense that the interpretation of *vrata* is new but also in the sense that it differs in other respects as well, from the accepted versions, as will be seen (in many cases).

THE MORE IMPORTANT PASSAGES WHERE THE MEANING D₂ FOR *VRATA* IS MORE NATURAL THAN ANY OTHER AND LESS VAGUE THAN 'HOLY LAW.'

[D₂=(Fixed) passage, way, (circular) path, (settled) route, (beaten) track, channel or bed (of Rivers or Waters), area or sphere of rolling or expansion.]

§ 9. I. 183. 3 :—

आ तिष्ठतं सुवृत्तं यो रथो वाम्
अनु व्रतानि वर्तते हविष्मान् ।
येन नरा नासत्येष्वयं
वर्तिर्याथस्तनयाय त्मने च ॥

Trans :—Mount up to the lightly rolling one (*suvr'tam*), that car or yours, laden with oblations, which rolls along (*var'tate*) the (prescribed) routes (*vratāni*), whereon O Men, O Nāsatyas, you go your round (*var'tiḥ*) for stimulation for us and (our) offspring.

NOTES :—From the deliberate play on the root *vr*t and its derivatives indicated within brackets above, it should be clear that *vratāni* is the cognate object of the intransitive verb *vr*t, allied to it etymologically. The importance of this verse for establishing the derivation of *vrata* from the root *vr*t cannot be overstressed.

§ 10. X. 111. 4ab :—

इन्द्रो मद्भा महतो अर्णवस्य
व्रतामिनादङ्गिरोभिर्गुणानः ।
[पुरुणि चिचि तताना रजांसि
दाधार यो धरुणं सत्यताता ॥]

Trans :—Indra broke down with his might, the *vratās* of the mighty *arṇavā*, praised (during the act) by the *Angirasas* ;

NOTES :—If ever, evidence of the concrete and physical character of the *vratās* was wanted, it is supplied by this passages. It

cannot be said that the word here represents a 'concept' or 'idea.' The *vratás* spoken of are those of *arṇavá*, a watery monster who is also named in a parallel passage (a *partial repetition*) viz. X. 67.12: *Indro mahnā mahato arṇavásya; ví mūrdhānam abhinad arbudásya* = 'Indra broke down with his might, the head of the mighty *arṇavá*, *arbudá* by name.' So the word *vratás* must mean the *tracks* or *paths* of the physical extension of the sea-monster *arbudá*, with which he blocked up the waters (Cosmic?) by lying across them. That he did so *by lying athwart the beds of the waters like Vṛtra* is clear from the fact that breaking down the *vratás* or *areas* or *spaces* of *extension* of the body of this monster was like breaking his head! An exactly parallel description is that of *Vṛtra* in I. 32, 7, 8 and 10. The 10th verse says that *Vṛtra's (dead) body remained in the midst of river-streams*. So the passage is almost conclusive evidence of our meaning of *vratá*.

§ 11. V. 67. 3 :—

विश्वे हि विश्ववेदसो
वरुणो मित्रो अर्यमा ।
व्रता पदेव सश्वरे
पान्ति सत्यं रिषः ॥

Trans :—All these-Varuṇa, Mitra and Aryaman, the all-possessors, follow the *vratás*, as if with feet and protect the mortal from harm.

NOTES :—The phrase : '*padā iva*' (=as if, with feet), is eloquent testimony in favour of our meaning. The *devás* follow the fixed luminous paths in the heavens, as surely and as regularly as *as if they were endowed with feet*! No meaning other than "courses, paths or ways" in suitable here.

§ 12. I. 83. 5 :—

यज्ञैरथर्वा प्रथमः पथस्तते
ततः सूर्यो व्रतपा वेन आजनि ।
आ गा आजशनादुशनां काव्यः सचा
यमस्य जातममृतं यजामहे ॥

Trans :—Atharvan first extended the paths; then was born the yearning Sūrya, the Keeper of the *vratás*; *kāvya*⁸ *uśanā* drove hither the Cows together; we worship the immortal birth of Yama.

8 *Kāvya Uśanā* fashioned the bolt for slaying *Vṛtra*, for Indra, (I. 121. 12) who is represented as identifying himself with that sage (IV. 26. 1). Thus the Cows are the morning rays or the waters.

NOTES:—This is a very important verse for the original sense of *vrata* which I maintain, is 'the paths' of the luminaries like Sūrya. The first pāda actually refers to these 'paths' which in other passages are described as laid down by Varuṇa etc. for Sūrya (VII 87. 1). The third pāda refers to the driving of the cows along the same *vrata* or paths.

[Though this is not the place to discuss the whole question, I may as well suggest that here in the 4th pāda, Yama is plainly indicated as the (setting) Sun rising again in the east! I personally think further that the 'yama and yamī' story is the story of the dawn and the rising sun, who (the latter) is often called *svāsur jārāh* (the lover of his sister) in the form of Pūṣan (VI. 55. 5)].

§ 13. I. 65. 2 :—

ऋतस्य देवा अनु व्रता गु-
र्ध्वत् परिष्टियौर्न भूम्
वर्धन्तीमापः, पुन्वा सुशिश्विम्-
ऋतस्य योना, गर्भे सुजातम् ॥ २ ॥

Trans:—The gods followed the *vratās* of *ṛtā*; there was (as a result) an encircling, as if heaven (should encircle) the earth. The waters strengthen with praise, him the well-developed, the well-born (child) in the lap, in the womb of *ṛtā*.

NOTES:—I have explained in my notes to III. 4-7 (which please see) why I think that the original sense of *ṛtā* in the Rv., was probably 'the broad belt of the Zodiac'. Even apart from that, our meaning of *vratās* as 'paths' receives confirmation from the present verse which says that when the gods followed the *vratās*, there was an encircling movement, which almost looked like the encircling of the earth by heaven. In other words, the luminaries followed the *vratās* or paths that extended from one end of heaven to another and back again (i. e. across the Zodiacal belt which encircles the earth and thus could be called the *vratās* of *ṛtā*).

§ 14. I. 92. 12 :—

पशून् चित्रा सुभगा प्रथाना
सिन्धुर्न क्षोदं उर्विया व्यश्चेत् ।
अस्मिन्ती दैव्यानि व्रतानि
सूर्यस्य चेति रुहिभिर्दृशाना ॥

Trans:—The resplendent, blessed one, unfolding her rays like kine, like a river (unleashing) its flood, has shone forth, far and wide. Not missing the divine *vratās*, she is perceived as visible with the rays of the sun.

NOTES:—A very important passage is this, for determining the meaning of *vratā* (compare I. 124. 2). If this verse is read in connection with I. 124. 3 and V. 80. 4, both of which have an identical second hemistich which may be rendered as “straight does she go along the path of *ṛtā*; as one who knows, she does not miss the directions”, there can be no doubt that the *vratās* are the paths of the luminaries extending in the right directions and laid along *ṛtā* [the broad belt and the Zodiac? See my notes to III. 4. 7].

§ 15. I. 124. 2 :—

अमिनती देव्यानि व्रतानि
प्रमिनती मनुष्या युगानि ।
ईयुषीणामुपमा शश्वतीनाम्
आयतनिं प्रथमोषा व्ययौत् ॥

Trans:—Not missing the divine *vratās* (but) reducing human ages, Uṣas, the last of those that have departed, but the first of those yet to come, has shone forth.

NOTES:—Considered along with the verse I. 92. 12 (see notes thereto), this verse may be said to give the exact connotation of the word *vratā*. The last two pādas: ‘the last of those that have departed’ etc., show that the whole series of Dawns is in continuous movement and that it is during this movement that the *vratās* of the gods are not missed. In I. 92. 12, the same expression, in fact, a pāda identical with the first pāda here, occurs and the context of ‘not missing the *vratās*’ is the ‘being perceived as visible with the sun’s rays’. So, luminaries like the Dawn shine and move while following the *vratās* i.e. either fixed tracks in the heavens or the regular and fixed routine or laws of movement prescribed for them.

§ 16. The epithet *vi-vrata* (following various *vratās*) is valuable evidence of *vratā* meaning, in the Ṛv., predominantly ‘path, way, course, career’ etc. In six passages out of the seven in which the word occurs viz. I. 63. 2, VIII. 12. 15, X. 49. 2, X. 105. 2, 4 (as a dual); and X. 23. 1 (as a plural), it qualifies the (two) tawny (or bay) steeds of Indra [*hāri, hāriṇām, nadāyoh*]. The context shows that ‘moving or wandering along diverse paths’ is the only natural rendering and in fact, Griffith⁹ renders it (in X. 49. 2) thus! In one of these passages viz. VIII. 12. 15, we are told that the bay steeds [which are described in other passages as *vīvrata*, in a good sense] are not *vīvrata* (or deviators) from *ṛtā*. In other words, however, diverse their paths, they do not deviate from *ṛtā* [which

as I have suggested elsewhere,¹⁰ may have meant the broad belt of the Zodiac within which the luminaries moved and along which the *vrātās* of Indra's baysteeds were laid]. In X. 55. 3 cd. (the seventh passage) we have *jyōtiṣā vīvratena*...I purposely give here the translation of the passage by Griffith,¹¹ so that no pre-conceived notions of mine could be said to have strained the sense—' with four and thirty lights he (i. e. Indra) looks around, lights of one colour, though their ways are diverse ' (italics mine). This passage describing the splitting up and spreading of the light into 34 ways or paths is eloquent testimony of our view of *vrātā*. A parallel word is *vī-pathi* and the passage V. 52. 10 ab :—

आपथयो विपथयोऽतस्तथा अनुपथाः ।

has two epithets of the Maruts, corresponding to our *vī-vrata* and *anu-vrata* (with only the substitution of *pāth* for *vrātā* !).

§ 17. VI. 70. 5ab :—

मधु नो यावापृथिवी निमिक्षतां
मधुश्चता मधुबुधे मधुव्रते ।

Trans:—'May heaven and earth, dropping *mādhū*, yielding *mādhū* and having *vrātās* of *mādhū*, pour down *mādhū* (mead; here, rain) for us'.

NOTES:—Here the translation:., 'law', 'duty' or 'will' for *vrātā* becomes almost absurd! In fact, Griffith¹¹ renders the epithet *mādhuvrata* as: 'with balm upon your paths'; and this is undoubtedly correct. The paths of the luminaries were laid (as we have seen from I. 35. 11) in the *antārikṣa* (air) i. e. between heaven and earth to whom they may properly be said to belong.

§ 18. III. 3. 5a :—

चंद्रसग्निं चन्द्रशं हरिव्रतं ... ।

NOTES:—The epithet *hāri-vrata* used of Agni here tells the same tale. Agni is described as 'bright (*candrām*), with a bright car (*candrā-ratham*) and of reddish-brown or tawny *vrātā* (*hāri-vrata*)'. I think the context here leaves no doubt that *vrātā* in *hāri-vrata* means 'trail, career, or path', the compound meaning 'whose career or paths are golden'. Oldenberg's translation¹² 'whose every law is golden' is an example of the straits to which non-recognition of this sense of *vrātā* can drive scholars!

10. See my notes to III. 4. 7.

11. Hymns of the R̥gveda, English Translation.

12. SBE. Vol. 46, p. 232 ff.

§ 19. We shall now consider the *śuci-vrata* passages. The root *śuc* in *śuci* means 'to shine, to flame up.' In IV. 2. 17 it means 'to kindle.' Therefore the word *śuci* can only mean 'brilliant, bright, flaming, resplendent.' The meaning 'pure' is purely figurative and secondary and is found only in a few passages (about six or seven out of a total of one hundred and more) in the Rv. when it is an epithet of *manīṣā*, *stōma*, *matī* or *gīraḥ*.¹³ If we therefore shed our prejudice of *vrata* as meaning nearly everywhere, 'vow, holy work or service, holy law imposed by gods on men', then *śuci-vrata* can only be rendered as 'of shining paths, ways, courses or career' or as 'of shining dominion.'

It is an epithet of Agni in three passages. In VIII. 43. 16b Agni is addressed as 'of red steeds and bright *vrata*.' Evidently Agni 'of the blazing trail or path' is meant. In VIII. 44. 21 Agni is described as *śucivratatama* i. e. *śuci-vrata par excellence* and as 'shining bright when sacrificed to' (pāda c). In X. 118. 1, Agni is spoken of as 'shining among men and *śuci-vrata* in his own abode.' All these contexts show that the epithet pictures Agni as One 'with a blazing trail, track or sphere.' It is interesting to note that the Rv. poets have not failed to notice and develop a paradoxical aspect of Agni's activity viz. that if Agni blazes the trail while he is advancing, he also leaves a charred and black path of cinders and ruins when he has advanced. Hence, he is called '*Kṛṣṇādhvā*' (II. 4. 6c) and '*Kṛṣṇā-vartani*' (VIII. 23. 19c) meaning 'leaving a black trail, *vartani* being a synonym of one *vrata* !

As regards the two *śuci-vrata* passages referring to the Aśvins, in one (I. 15. 11), they are further specified as 'having fires blazing' or 'bright with flames' and in another, they are addressed as 'sons of heaven.' These specifications lend point to our view of the epithet, in as much as the Aśvins as *matutinal deities* follow a luminous path across the sky. In VI. 70. 2, heaven and earth, qualified as *śuci-vrata* are described as 'illuminators of this world.' Finally, from what we know of Mitra and Varuṇa, we should be prepared for the application of this epithet to them (VI. 16. 24; III. 62. 17). In the latter passage, they are described as '*śuci-vrata over long distances*' (*drāghīṣṭhābhiḥ*). I do not think, the latter word should be unnecessarily rendered as 'for a long time' (!) because we refuse to recognise the *spatial* character of *vrata* !

§ 20. III. 59. 9 :—

मित्रो देवेष्वायुषु जनाय वृत्तबर्हिषे ।
इषं वृष्टव्रता अकः ॥

13. The word is thus parallel to the English word *bright*.

Trans :—‘Mitra among gods and men has provided foods (*iṣaḥ*) that are *iṣṭāvratāḥ*, for the man whose sacrificial grass is trimmed’.

NOTES:—Macdonell¹⁴ explains the compound as follows:—a Bv. agreeing with *iṣas*, ‘food regulated by the ordinances which Mitra desires i. e. to be eaten according to fixed rules’. This is an example of the straits to which scholars are driven by their fixed notion that *vratā* means the same thing in the Rv. as in later literature! According to Macdonell, *iṣṭā* the first member of the compound refers to the desires of Mitra; ‘*vratā* the second member, to the fixed rules followed by men and the whole compound qualifies *iṣaḥ*!! In my opinion, the explanation of this epithet of ‘foods’ is found in the phrases ‘*iṣām netā*’ = ‘the leader or guide of food (to men)’ as used of Agni in III. 23. 2d and ‘*iṣām volhā*’ = ‘the conductor of food’, as used of the car of the Aśvins in VII. 69. 1. We can now understand our epithet as meaning ‘(foods) which follow the desired paths’ or ‘going the desired (right) way’ so as to reach the devout worshipper. I think any other sense is hardly natural.

§ 21. V. 40. 6 :—

स्वर्भानोरध यदिद्र माया
अवो दिवो वर्तमाना अवाहन् ।
गृळ्हं सूर्यं तससापर्वत्रेन
तुरीयेण ब्रह्मणाविन्दद्वित्रिः ॥

Trans :—When, O Indra, thou didst strike down the (magic) wiles of *Svarbhānu*, operating below the sky, Atri recovered with his fourth prayer, *Sūrya* concealed in darkness that strayed from its *vratā* (*āpa-vratena*).

NOTES:—It is now generally admitted that this verse describes an eclipse of the Sun—a somewhat unexpected phenomenon. When the darkness envelopes and conceals the Sun every night, it may be called the ‘darkness that follows the regular routine (*vratā*) or *ānurvratā* but when all of a sudden, during daytime, the darkness envelopes the Sun, it surely has strayed from its regular routine and may be described as *āpavratā*; compare ‘*jyōtiṣā vivratena*’ in X. 55. 3cd: ‘with light that scatters in various directions’ or ‘goes along diverse paths’.

§ 22. VII. 47. 3 :—

ज्ञातपवित्राः स्वधया मदन्तीः
देवीर्देवानामपि यन्ति पाथः ।
ता इन्द्रस्य न भिनन्ति व्रतानि
सिन्धुभ्यो हव्यं घृतवज्जुहोत ॥

Trans :—(The waters) possessing a hundred (i. e. numberless) means of purification, delighting in their own strength, the Goddesses go the *path* of the Gods. They do not miss the *vratās* of Indra ; offer the oblation (rich) in ghee to the Rivers.

NOTES :—The 2nd and 3rd pādas which are mutually explanatory, give convincing proof of my proposition that *vratā* = the *path* of the Gods in heaven and the next verse of this same hymn tells us that Indra excavated a *gātū* (or pathway) for the Rivers to flow and that they were illumined by the beams of Sūrya. So *vratā* is the luminous path traced by the gods across the heavens, the very track followed by the heavenly Rivers. In the Avesta also, the waters are said to follow the path made by Mazda or the way made by the gods. In the Vendidad XXI. 4-5, the swift-horsed sun is asked to go along the watery way in the skies above.

§ 23. VIII. 40. 8 :—

या नु श्वेताववो दिव उच्चरातु उप शुभिः ।
 इन्द्राग्न्योरनु व्रत मुहाना यन्ति सिन्धवो
 यान् र्सीं वन्धादमुञ्चतां
 [नभंतामन्युके संसे]

Trans :—Those two Resplendent ones who rise from below the sky upwards with their rays ; bearing on in accordance with the *vratā* of (those very) Indra and Agni, the Rivers go on—the Rivers which they released from restraint.

NOTES :—It is well-known in the mythology of the Rv., that Indra who released the streams pent up by the dragon (II. 11. 2). dug out channels for them (II. 15. 3) ; the meaning of *vratā* here can therefore only be 'the paths or channels chalked out for the waters by Indra (and Agni)'. The two *Resplendent* ones (*śvetāu*), I take to be Indra and Agni (following Sāyaṇa).

§ 24. IX. 82. 5 :—

यथा पूर्वैभ्यः शतसा अमुञ्चः
 सहस्रसाः पुर्यया वाजमिन्दो ।
 एवा पवस्व सुविताय नव्यसे
 तवं व्रतमन्वापः सचन्त ॥

Trans :—(Just) as, for the ancients thou, O Indu, unwearying, the winner of hundreds, the winner of thousands, wentest round [*pariyāyā* i. e. in passing through the strainer and flowing into the jars] to strength [*vājam*, because it is then *strengthened with water*

and milk], so (now) flow on for new blessings; the waters follow thy *vratā* (or course).

NOTES:—IX. 2. 3 and 4 describe very much the same operation in the preparation of the Soma juice. We are there told that 'the Soma was made to flow and that the waters follow after him'. This makes it quite clear that the waters go the way (*vratā*) that Soma has gone i. e. the admixture of the Soma with water takes place when, after passing the filter, the streams of Soma flow on to the forest of vats like buffaloes (IX. 33. 1). It may also be noted that this is the earthly version of the heavenly rivers following the *vratā* of the celestial Soma.

§ 25. IX. 35. 4:—

प्र वाजमिन्दुरिष्याति
सिषांसन् वाजसा ऋषिः ।
व्रता विद्वान आयुषा ॥

Trans:—Indu stimulates strength, seeking to win—the Sage, the winner of booty, discovering the *vratās* and the weapons,

NOTES:—What could the *discovery* of *vratās* mean? It is clear that it is something similar to *āyudhā* or some kind of material means of victory and should mean the 'routes' or 'laws of movements' by following which success is ensured, as by the use of weapons. *Vratā* thus, cannot mean any 'spiritual means' like vows or religious observances. The last pāda is thus, by a curious coincidence the version of the English phrase: 'finding (*vidānāḥ*) ways (*vratā*) and means (*āyudhā*)' [to victory]!

§ 26. VI. 8. 2:—

स जायमानः परमे व्योमनि
व्रतान्यग्निर्ब्रूतुपा अरक्षत ।
व्यन्तरिक्षममिमीत सुक्रतुः
वैश्वानरो महिना नाकमस्पृशत् ॥

Trans:—He, born in the highest heaven, (i. e.) Agni, the keeper of the *vratās*, protected the *vratās*; highly wise, he measured out the firmament; (the) Vaiśvānara has touched heaven by his splendour.

NOTES:—This is a description of Agni Vaiśvānara (*belonging to all men* or Universal Agni) in its celestial aspect. The association of the function of 'measuring out the firmament' with that of 'protecting the *vratās*' and the reference to the illumination of heaven in the last pāda, clearly brings out the sense of *vratāni* as the

luminous paths in the heavens followed by the celestial Fire identified with the Sun (compare I. 83. 5b). 'Measuring out the firmament' is the same act as 'going along the vrātās or routes laid along the firmament'!

§ 27. I. 24. 10 :—

अनी य ऋक्षा निहितास उश्चा
नक्तं ददृशे कुहं चिद् दिवेद्युः ।
अदब्धानि वरुणस्य व्रतानि
विचाकंशश्चन्द्रमा नक्तमेति ॥

*Trans:—*These constellations set high (in heaven), which have been seen at night, wheresoever have they gone by day ; the *vrātās* of Varuṇa are inviolate ; illumining (these), the moon goes on during the night.

*NOTES:—*There is a reference here to the invisibility or temporary disappearance by day of the constellations. The *pathways* laid down by Varuṇa for the gods would not be known at night, if it were not for the moon who by her course makes them bright and if it were not for the constellations that are seen at night. The *vrātās* (or paths) are thus seen to be *intact* (*ādabdhāni*) at night. v. 8ab says: V. has made a wide path for the Sun to travel ; cf also VII. 60. 4. and VII. 87. 1. These fixed routes or paths (*pathāḥ*) become the *vrātās* of the gods (like the Sun), when they proceed (root *vr̥t*) along them.

§ 28. VII. 83. 9 :—

वृत्राण्यन्यः समिधेषु जिघ्रते
व्रतान्यन्यो अभि रक्षते सदा ।
हवामहे वां वृषणा सुवृक्षिताभिः
अस्मे इन्द्रावरुणा शर्म यच्छतम् ॥

*Trans:—*One [(of you two) i. e. Indra] slays the *vr̥trās* (enemies) in battles and the other (i. e. Varuṇa) always guards the *vrātās*.

*NOTES:—*It is quite in keeping with the character of Varuṇa that he should look after the safety of the routes, he dug out for Sūrya and the divine waters (cf. VII. 87. 1). It is also well-known that these pathways of light and channels for the Rivers come into operation *only after Indra has disposed off the obstructive vr̥trās or enemies*. Thus the two respective functions of Indra and Varuṇa are complementary. *The connection of the word with the killing of foes makes our meaning more likely than the vague one of 'holy laws' etc.*

§ 29. VIII. 94. 2:—

यस्यां देवा उपस्थे
व्रता विश्वे धारयन्ते ।
सूर्यामासा दृशे कम् ॥

Trans :—She (i. e. Pṛṣṇi), in whose laps, all the gods maintain (*dhārāyante*) their *vratās*, the sun and moon also, in order that they may be seen.

NOTES :—The statement in the 3rd pāda, that the sun and moon are seen only when they keep to their *vratās*, shows us that the sense of that word is 'tracks, or laws of movement followed by the sun and moon and other luminaries.' As to *where* these movements take place, is rendered clear by the phrase 'in the lap (i. e. vicinity) of Pṛṣṇi'. The latter represents the mottled storm-cloud or the mother of the 'Maruts', whose lap could only mean the heavens. The *vratā...dhārāyante* of this verse gives us the most natural explanation of the epithet *dhṛtāvratā* applied to Varuṇa and the other gods.

§ 30. VII. 75. 3:—

एते त्वे भानवो दर्शतायाः
चित्रा उषसौ अमृतांस आशुः ।
जनयन्तो देव्यानि व्रतानि—
आपृणन्तो अन्तरिक्षा व्यस्थुः ॥

Trans :—Here have arrived those immortal bright splendours of the lovely Dawn; *generating the divine vratās* and filling the intermediate spaces (atmosphere), they have spread [round about in various direction].

NOTES :—The function of 'generating [or making manifest] the *vratās*' is, as it were, explained in this verse! When the rays of the Dawn spread, the routes of the luminaries which the Dawn herself is soon to follow, become visible and are therefore said to have been created, as it were. We cannot translate *vratās* here as 'rites of holy worship,' sandwiched as the third pāda is between the first two, intimating the arrival of the rays and the fourth, registering their spreading in all directions! Compare III. 55. 1, which tells us that at the flashing forth of the Dawns, the adorning or polishing of the *vratās* of the gods takes place and I. 31. 2ab which ascribes the same feat to Agni who is kindled into a blaze at the flashing of the Dawn.

§ 31. III. 61. 1 :—

उषो वाजेन वाजिनि प्रचेताः
स्तोमं जुषस्व गृणतो मघोनि ।
पुराणी देवि युवतिः पुराधि-
रनु व्रतं चरसि विश्ववारे ॥

Trans :—O wise Uṣas, rich with riches (or booty), accept the praise of the Singer, O Liberal Giver! Thou, O Liberal Goddess, ancient yet young, sustainer of many, (or active one!), thou *movest* in accordance with the *vrata*, O Possessor of all treasures!

NOTES:—Here also, as shown in the notes to VII. 75. 3, the context shows the meaning of *vrata*. If we now compare: I. 124. 3c: *ṛtāsya pānthām anv-eti sādhu*, (*prajānātiva nā diśo mināti*), with our *pāda*: *anu vratām carasi*, we see that the two parallel verbs of motion ($\sqrt{\text{car}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{i}}$) with the same preposition, determine the meaning of *vrata* as a *path*, *route* or *way* traversed or gone over by the Dawn.

§ 32. III. 55. 1 :—

उषसः पूर्वा अथ यद् व्यूषु-
र्महद् वि जज्ञे अक्षरं पदे गोः ।
व्रता देवानामुप नु प्रभूषन्
महद् देवानामसुर्वमेकम् ॥

Trans :—When the earlier dawns flashed forth, the great *akṣara* was born in the Cow's step. Following (or adorning, *prabhūṣan*, pr. pt) as it does now, the *vratās* (*fixed pathways*) of the gods, mighty and unrivalled is the spiritual power of the gods.

NOTES:—I take the last two *pādas* as one sentence (Cf. I. 31. 2ab.) To take the third *pāda* as elliptical¹⁵: "Administering the laws of the gods (I, the poet, say this)" is, to say the least, highly artificial. Again how the *vratās* of the *gods* can be administered by the human worshipper or poet is a mystery! The fact is, that the meaning of the word *vrata* in the classical language is often read into the R̥gveda! Compare VII. 75. 3, where also we are told that the *vratās* of the *devās* come into play immediately after the arrival of the Dawn.

15. Oldenberg; Noten.

§ 33. III. 38. 6 :—

त्रीणि राजाना विदधे पुरुणि
परि विश्वानि भूषथः सदांसि ।
अपश्यमनु मनसा जगन्वाद्
व्रते गन्धर्वा अपि वायुकेशाद् ॥

Trans:—Three dwellings, (even) many, (in fact) all (the dwellings) in the assembly, O Kings, do ye (two) invest (with the beauty of your presence). Going there in spirit, I saw the Gandharvas with their tresses (fluttering) in the wind, on (or inside) the *vratā*.

NOTES:—The verse along with the whole hymn is rather obscure but for our purposes, the obscurity is no obstacle. The kings are Mitra and Varuṇa; the three dwellings are naturally heaven, earth and the firmament or mid-air. When the poet (in the last two pādas) gives us a picture of his mental vision, his poetic day-dream, he says *he saw the Gandharvas in the vratā*. The epithet *vāyukeśān* 'with their tresses fluttering in the wind' gives us just the information we need about *vratā*, viz. that it represents the 'wind-swept track or dominion in the firmament followed by the luminaries.' This *vratā* is described variously as laid down by Indra or Mitra and Varuṇa. So we might take *vratā* here, as that of Indra who supposed to be the deity of the hymn or of Mitra and Varuṇa referred to in *ab*.

§ 34. V. 63. 7 :—

धर्मणा मित्रावरुण विपश्चिता
व्रता रक्षेथे असुरस्य मायया ।
ऋतेन विश्वं सुवन्नं वि राजथः
सूर्यमा धत्थो दिवि चिन्त्यं रथम् ॥

Trans:—With *Dharmān* (supporting power, statute or ordinance), O wise Mitra and Varuṇa, you protect the *vratās* with the occult (or wonderful) power of the *Asura* [i. e. 'mysterious being' or 'miraculous lord' in a good sense]. By *Ṛtā* you govern the whole world and establish in heaven, the sun—the shining car.

NOTES:—This verse sets out clearly the distinctive connotation of the three words *ṛtā*, *vratā* and *dhārman* [Cf. I. 65. 2; II. 27. 8; especially III. 4. 7]. What is to be noted is that the guarding of *vratās* is no feeble feat like the obeying of moral laws! (Compare I. 144. 1). It requires all the strength of an *āsura*; this means that *vratās* are something tangible 'like heavenly pathways' which have to be

guarded from the forces of Evil and Darkness like Vṛtra. This becomes clear from verses 3 and 4 of this hymn, which tell us that with his *māyā*, V. makes the Sun cross the sky and from III. 61. 7. according to which, Mitra and Varuṇa send forth the Dawns with their *māyā*.

§ 35. III. 55. 6 :—

शयुः परस्तादथ नु दिमाता
अचन्धुनश्चरति वृत्त एकः ।
मित्रस्य ता वरुणस्य व्रतानि
महद् देवानामसुरत्वमेकम् ॥

Trans :—The lone calf, with two mothers, unfettered, moves on now, (though it was) asleep on the other side (so far). *They* (i. e. the lines or paths of its movement) are the *vratās* of Mitra and Varuṇa. Great is alone, the spiritual power of the gods.

NOTES :—This is a description of Agni in the form of the Sun. The two mothers may be 'day and night' or 'heaven and earth'. [The two *arānis* or firesticks could be called 'the mothers' only of the terrestrial form of Agni]. In my opinion, this hints at the story of Agni's (i. e. the Sun's) hiding in the *waters* which are on the other side. The Sun who has not appeared for a long time and was presumably sleeping (*śayuh*) on the other side, has now risen and begun to move along the *vratās* (or paths) made for it by Mitra and Varuṇa; *tā vratāni* refers us back to *carati*.

§ 36. IV. 53. 4 :—

अदाभ्यो भुवनानि प्रचाकशद्
व्रतानि देवः सवित्ताभि रक्षते ।
प्राज्ञाग्राहू भुवनस्य प्रजाभ्यो
धृतव्रतो मुहो अज्मस्य राजति ॥

Trans :—The Undeceivable One, God Savitr, (in the act of) enlightening (all) beings, guards the *vratās*. For the progeny of the world, (the *dhṛtāvṛata*) the supporter of the *vratās* has extended his arms and rules over (his) brilliant pathway (*ajmasya*).

NOTES :—It is to be noted that guarding or supporting the *vratās* is here closely associated with and seems to be indispensable for the shining of Savitr. So *vratās* should mean either 'the fixed tracks of the luminaries like Savitr across the heavens' or if we insist on the rendering 'laws', then the '*laws of movement, the rules of the (heavenly) road, the fixed routine*' that must be followed by the

luminaries like Savitr if they are to favour the world. It may be pointed out further, that there is here, as often in the R̥gveda, a variation in the second half, of the very theme expressed in the first half. Thus *ājmasya rājati* is, in my opinion a variation of 'vrātāni rakṣate.'

§ 37. If, because Varuṇa's vrātās remain unimpaired, the moon shines brightly and the stars appear during the night (I. 24. 10), if he has made (or excavated) a path or paths (*pathāh*) for the Sun (I. 24. 8; VII. 87. 1), if the gods do not miss the fixed (*dhruvā*) vrātās of (Mitra and) Varuṇa and if (Mitra and) Varuṇa guard the vrātās (V. 63. 7; 69. 4), it is no wonder that Varuṇa should be described in about 8 passages, as pre-eminently the *dhṛtāvṛata* or he who maintains intact the paths (he has excavated) for the luminaries or who sees that the fixed laws (of movement by the luminaries along those paths) are properly observed (and followed by the gods). It is in this light that the *dhṛtāvṛata* passages in the RV. receive their most natural explanation even in the extended application of the epithet to Indra, Agni, the Viśvedevas etc.

I. 25. 8: The *dhṛtāvṛata* Varuṇa knows the twelve months (and the intercalary one) with their progeny (the days and the nights ? Compare VI. 28.1 where the Dawns are called *prajāvatīh*). The meaning of this compound is, as it were, explained by the passage VIII. 94.2 where we are told that, the Viśvedevas and the Sun and Moon also, maintain the vrātās (*vrātā dhārāyante*) in order that they may be seen (shining).

With regard to one *dhṛtāvṛata* passage: I. 25.6, it has been generally supposed that this is the only passage in the RV., in which the epithet is applied not to the god but to the worshipper and the verse has, therefore, been suspected as a probable interpolation in the hymn; but I hold that even here, it is applied to Varuṇa, the construction being: *dhṛtāvṛatāya dāsūse* i. e., the worshipper of the *dhṛtāvṛata* Varuṇa. This is rendered almost certain by the passage X. 113.5 where we have ' *Mitrāya Varuṇāya dāsūse* ': the worshipper of Mitra and Varuṇa. The same construction is found in I. 74.9c: ' *devēbhyo deva dāsūse* ' meaning ' to the worshipper of the gods, ' *dāsūse* being used with the dative (of the object of adoration and service). This confirms further, our view that in the R̥gVeda, the vrātās of the gods are more prominently thought of, than those of men.

THE MORE IMPORTANT PASSAGES WHERE THE MEANING D₄ FOR VRATÁ IS APPROPRIATE

[D₄=routine, career, law or laws of movement, periodical *appearance* (in heaven) or (the coincident) *visit* (to the worshipper's home or sacrifice), settled procedure, customary activity, prescribed behaviour, (expected) deportment, recurring march or passage, (seasonal) journey etc.]

§ 38. V. 83. 5 :—

यस्य व्रते पृथिवी ननमीति
यस्य व्रते शफवज्जभृतीति ।
यस्य व्रत ओषधीर्विश्वरूपाः
स नः पर्जन्य माहि शर्म यच्छ ॥

Trans :—(In or) Under whose *vratá*, the earth bends low ; under whose *vratá*, the hoofed (creation) bestirs itself ; under whose *vratá*, the plants become omniform ; as such, O Parjanya, confer a great cover on us.

NOTES :—Evidently, *vratá* here represents the *pouring down*, the *downward movement*, *career* or the *flowing down* of Parjanya (the Rain-cloud in the form of pouring rain). Actually, v. 7b speaks of the flying around of Parjanya with his water-bearing car ! This is almost a convincing passage for our definite sense of *vratá* instead of the indefinite and vague one of ' Law, ordinance ' etc.

§ 39. I. 144. 1 :—

एति प्र होता व्रतमस्य माययोध्वां
दधानः शुचिपेशसं धियम् ।
अभि स्रुचः क्रमते दक्षिणावृत्तो
या अस्य धाम प्रथमं ह निंसते ॥

Trans :—The Hótr (i. e. Agni himself) goes forward along his *vratá*, by his wonderful power (*māyā*), holding upward the brightly-decorated prayer. He steps forward in the direction of the sacrificial ladles which are turned to the right and which first kiss his foundation (i. e. the place of Agni).

NOTES :—Here, the verb of motion *éti prá*, used in connection with *vratá* is important. Further, there is a reference to the ' stepping forward ' in the 3rd pāda. Surely then, *vratá* is something *gone over in the process of stepping forward* and is therefore, ' the fixed order of movement,' or ' regular routine ' of Agni. Compare V. 63^{7b} where

we are told : keeping to (or guarding) the *vratās* is done by Mitra and Varuṇa by exercising the *māyā* of the Asura. Thus, whether the *vratās* (routes or routine) are divine or terrestrial, the task of following (them) requires the exercise of *māyā*.

§ 40. I. 36. 5 :—

सुन्द्रो होता गृहपतिरग्ने दूतो विशामसि ।

त्वे विश्वा संगतानि ब्रता ध्रुवा यानि देवा अकृण्वत ॥

Trans :—Thou art the agreeable Hotr, the householder, O Agni, the messenger of the people. In thee, are centred (or focussed) all the eternal *vratās* (prescribed periodical movements) which the gods have made [*ākṛṇvata* ; of the epithet *pathi-kṛt*=path-maker in X. 14.15].

NOTES :—It is easy to see why Agni became the guiding or controlling centre of the movements of the luminaries across the heavens. The calendar of the Vedic Ṛsis was meticulously correlated to the performances of various sacrifices throughout the year. Offerings were made into *the fire*, every morning and evening, on every new and full-moon day, at the commencement of every season and *ayana*. There is thus no need to translate *vratā* by the *vague* and colourless term 'laws.' We can specify them as 'the laws of movement of the *devās* across the heavens.' Compare VIII. 103. 1 where all the *vratās* are said to have been deposited in Agni—the greatest knower of paths (*gātṛ*).

§ 41. VIII. 103. 1 :—

अदर्शि गातुवित्तमो

यस्मिन् ब्रतान्यादधुः ।

उषो ह ज्ञातमार्यस्य वर्धनम्

अग्निं नक्षन्त नो गिरः ॥

Trans :—There has been seen the greatest *knower of paths*, in whom (the gods) have centred (or focussed) the *vratās*. Our prayers have approached Agni, the well-born furtherer of the Ārya.

NOTES :—The epithet '*gātuvittamah*': 'the expert in paths or ways' bring out the sense of the 2nd pāda. The paths or the fixed movements of the gods are, as it were, focussed in or regulated by Agni because there is a kindling of or the offering of oblations to Agni, to *mark the vratās* or regular and periodical movements of the gods. He is for the human worshipper, the earthly focus (the regulator) of the divine movements. Compare I. 36.5, where we have the same idea viz. that the *vratās* made by the gods are centred in Agni,

§ 42. X. 2. 4 :—

यद्वो वयं प्रसिनामं व्रतानि
विदुषां देवा अविदुष्टरासः ।
अग्निष्टद्विध्वमा पृणाति विद्वान्
येभिर्देवाँ ऋतुभिः कल्पयाति ॥

Trans :—When, O gods, we, most unknowing, miss any *vratās* of you, the knowing ones, Agni, the knowing one, makes good all that, so that he might accommodate the gods with the (proper) seasons.

NOTES :—Since, *making up for all the vratās that are missed*, is equivalent to the adjustment of the proper seasons to the (arrivals, appearances, movements or visits of the) proper gods, *vratā* cannot but mean the regular or periodical visit of the (proper) god to the place of worship at the proper season or the regular i. e. seasonal appearance or movement of the (proper) god in heaven, synchronizing with or honoured by the appropriate fire—ritual. Compare v. 3ab of this same hymn which says “We have come to the path of the gods (*devānām pānthām*), to shoulder that (task) which we can accomplish.”

§ 43. II. 8. 3 :—

य उ श्रिया दमेष्वा
दोषोषसि प्रज्ञस्यते ।
यस्य व्रतं न मीयते ॥

Trans :—He, who, by reason of his brilliance, is praised in the evening and at dawn and whose *vratā* (*thus*), is not missed.

NOTES :—The second *pāda* referring to the daily offering of prayer and praise to the fire-god at stated times, almost suggests that the so-called *vratā* of Agni is ‘his periodical appearance, or his regular round of visits to the worshipper’s house morning and evening’. It may be remembered in this connection that he is constantly designated a guest (*ātithi*) in human abodes; he knows the paths leading to the gods (X. 98.11) as well as to men (VI. 16.3) and is above all a *dūtā* visiting all abodes (IV. 8.1) regularly. See also notes to X. 2.4 (§ 42).

§ 44. III. 3. 9 :—

विभावां देवः सुरणः परि श्रितीः—
अग्निर्बभूव शर्वसा सुमद्रथः ।
तस्य व्रतानि शूरिपोषिणो वयं
उप शूषेस दम आ सुवृक्तिभिः ॥

Trans :—The shining cheerful god (Agni), on his chariot, has gone round the dwellings with (i. e. in) his might; may we, with

beautiful prayers, pay homage, in our house, to the *vrātās* of him who is richly-prospering.

NOTES :—The first two *pādas*, which describe Agni as ‘going round the dwelling on his chariot with his might’, should certainly throw light on the nature of the ‘*vrātās*’ which are honoured in the house with prayers! Surely *vrātās* must mean either ‘the fixed daily or periodical rounds or visits of Agni to the dwellings of his worshippers on his chariot’ or in general, ‘the movements or deeds of Agni’ because there is a reference to the use of ‘might’ (*śavasā*) in this encompassing of dwellings. And yet, it is surprising that Oldenberg (SBE. Vol. 46, p. 233) should render *vratā*, here, with the vague and inappropriate ‘commands’.

§ 45. X. 64. 5 ab :—

दक्षस्य वादिते जन्मानि व्रते
राजाना मित्रावरुणा विवाससि ।
[अतृत्पन्थाः पुरुरथो अर्यमा
समहोता विष्टरूपेषु जन्मसु ॥]

Trans :—Thou seekest, O Aditi, (the presence of) Mitra and Varuṇa, at the birth and *vratā* (career) of Dakṣa.

NOTES :—The rendering of *vratā* as ‘vow’ is (as the context shows) exceedingly awkward. To my mind, the verse is naturally to be explained thus :—Aditi is the mother of Mitra and Varuṇa and Aryaman (cf VIII. 25.3 ; 47.9 etc). She is also the mother of Dakṣa (II. 27.1). It is but natural that the presence of Mitra, Varuṇa and Aryaman (see the last two *pādas* of the verse), should be desired by Aditi at the birth and (subsequent) exploits or career of Dakṣa—another son of hers! Compare VI. 7.5 where the *vrātās* of Vaiśvānara (i. e. his triumphant career) immediately after birth, are lauded.

§ 46. IX. 70. 4 cd :—

[स मृज्यमानो दशभिः सुकर्मभिः
प्र मध्यमासु मातृहृ प्रमे सचा ।]
व्रतानि पानो अमृतस्य चारुण
उमे नृचक्षा अनु पश्यते विशौ ॥४॥

Trans :—He (i. e. Soma Pavamāna) guarding the ways (*vrātāni*) of the charming *amṛta*, the observer of men, closely watches both the tribes.

NOTES :—There can be no doubt that, here, *vrātāni* refers to the movements or passages or flowings of the Soma juice—the draught of immortality—during the various processes connected with the prepa-

ration and offering of Soma, because the first pāda speaks of Soma being purified (with the hands) by the ten fingers.

§ 47. *Dhūni-vrata* is an exclusive epithet of the Maruts occurring in *two passages*. Lightning is naturally the most outstanding characteristic of these Storm-gods. The noise they make is often mentioned and named as *thunder*, but it is also identified with the *roaring of the winds* (VII. 56.3). Now, *dhūni* as an adjective means 'roaring, raging, storming, thundering etc.' So when the host of the Maruts is described in V. 87.1 as rushing along and as *dhūni-vrata*, the only possible meaning is 'whose movements, deportment, career or paths are characterized by roaring, raging or storming'. The same would be the meaning of the epithet in V. 58.2b as qualifying the mighty impetuous band of the Maruts. [Compare in this connection V. 52.10ab, where the Maruts are described as a spreading band, wandering on or from the way '*āpathayo vpathayah*'...etc.]

§ 48. *Vṛṣa-vrata* occurs as an epithet of Soma in two passages : IX. 62.11 ; 64.1. Let us survey, in brief, the passages where Soma is either compared to or directly called a bull (*vṛṣan*). As a (tawny) bull he *roars* or *bellows* in the wood [IX. 7.3 ; 2, 6] ; he, well-knowing, stands like a bull among the cows (IX. 96.7d). He is the bull of heaven, earth and the rivers (VI. 44.21). Finally, Soma the bull, is said to brandish his horns and sharpen them (IX. 15.4) and to bellow and sharpen his horns (IX. 70.7). This survey shows us that *vṛṣa-vrata* in the two above-mentioned passages where it is an epithet of Soma, can only mean 'who behaves (i. e. bellows, brandishes and sharpens his horns and stands among the cows) like a bull or in other words 'whose *vrata* (behaviour, or deportment) is like that of a *vṛṣan*'

THE MORE IMPORTANT PASSAGES WHERE THE MEANING D₃ FOR VRATA IS APPROPRIATE.

[D₃ = The (entire) are covered by the (regular) paths, the sphere (of movement or influence), the region (of activity), prescribed dominion, realm, jurisdiction auspices, province etc.]

§ 49. III. 54. 5 :—

को अद्धा वेद क इह प्र वोचद्
देवो अद्धा पृथ्या३ का समेति ।
ददध्र पशामवमा सदांसि
परेषु या एषेषु ब्रतेषु ॥

Trans :—Who truly knows, who will declare here, what path leads to the gods ? Their lowest abodes are perceived—(abodes) which are in the secret *vrātās* beyond.

NOTES :—The statement that 'the lowest abodes are located in the secret *vrātās*,' suggests naturally a 'spatial' sense for the latter word, like 'region,' 'sphere' etc. It is quite clear that the poet, confounded by the disappearance of the *devās* (or luminaries) and the ensuing darkness is asking 'what path leads to the gods.' The same *vrātās* are spoken of in X. 114.2 as the seat of the three *Nirrtis*—(the personified power of evil and destruction) corresponding to the three earths. Compare also I. 163. 3, where the sun is called '*Trita*' when hidden in the secret *vrātā*.

§ 50. I. 31. 1cd :—

[त्वमग्ने प्रथमो अङ्गिरा ऋषि-
देवो देवानामभवः शिवः सखा ।]
तव ब्रूते कवयो विश्वनापसो-
अजायन्त मरुतो आजहृदयः ॥

Trans :—In thy *vrātā*, (O Agni), were born the sages, active through their wisdom, (sages, namely) the Maruts with shining spears.

NOTES :—The Maruts are storm-gods and their spears represent the lightning flashes. I. 134.4 tells us that Vāyu generated the Maruts, *in the wombs of heaven which is their birth-place*. The *vrātā* of Agni in our passage then, must mean 'the dominion, sphere of activity or region of Agni' in his celestial aspect and refer to heaven.

§ 51. V. 46. 7 :—

[देवानां पत्नीरुशतीरिवन्तु नः
प्रावन्तु नस्तुजये वाजसातये ।]
याः पार्थिवास्तो या अपामर्षि ब्रूते
ता नो देवीः सुहवाः शर्म यच्छत ॥

Trans :—[May the consorts of the gods...help us,—the consorts of the gods] who are terrestrial and who are in the *vrātā* of the waters ; as such, O ye goddesses, easily invoked, grant us bliss.

NOTES :—Max Müller¹⁶ in Note 2 on I. 166. 12 also renders *vrātā* here as the 'realm' of the waters and I agree, though I hold a different view regarding the original root from which the word is derived. He derives it from the root *vr* (*vr̥noti*)=what is enclosed protected or set apart and therefore 'realm.' I derive it from the root

vr̥t, to proceed, to turn, move on, pass on etc. and take *vr̥tá* as 'realm' because it is the *whole sphere* of movement and activity etc.! In the first view, *vr̥tá* is something 'exclusive;' in my view, it is something 'comprehensive!'

§ 52. VIII. 25. 17 :—

अनु पूर्वाण्योक्त्या
साम्राज्यस्य सश्रिम ।

मित्रस्य व्रता वरुणस्य दीर्घश्रुत् ॥

Trans :—Those ancient seats (*ókyā*) of Sovereignty, do we follow after-viz. the far-famed *vr̥tás* of Mitra and Varuṇa.

NOTES :—Here the context shows that the *vr̥tás* are *spatial* in sense; the *vr̥tás* are the '*ókyā*' (the abodes or centres of power), and *this need not been taken in a figurative sense, there being no need for such an artificial interpretation!* The natural meaning is 'the spheres of influence' 'the dominions' 'the realms' (*D₃*) or 'the paths of their movement or activity' (*D₄*) which virtually comes to the same thing.

§ 53. V. 72. 2ab :—

व्रतेन स्थो ध्रुवक्षेमा
धर्मिणा यातयज्जना ।

[नि बर्हिषि सदतां सोमपीतये ॥]

Trans :—By reason of (your) *vr̥tá*, are you [two i.e. Mitra and Varuṇa] of firm residence and through (your) established law (*dhármanā*) bestirrers of men...

NOTES :—This is an important passage distinguishing between *dhárman* and *vr̥tá* and indicating the sphere of each. It is by the *dhárman* laid down by them for men, that they stimulate the people whereas, by themselves following the *vr̥tá* (or keeping to their own prescribed *sphere of activity* or movement) they maintain their own stability. In other words, whereas adherence to *vr̥tá* governs or ensures the safe activity of gods like Mitra and Varuṇa, their pursuit of *dhárman* stimulates and regulates the activity of men.

§ 54. VII. 66. 6 :—

उत स्वराजो अदितिः
अदब्धस्य व्रतस्य ये ।
महो राजान ईशते ॥

Trans :—And those self-luminous ones,—(and) *Aditi* (also)—who as sovran of (heavenly) light (*maháḥ*)¹⁷, rule over unharmed *vr̥tá* (*dominion*).

17. I construe this form as Gen. Sing of *māh*. For my view of the meaning and form of the latter word in the Rv., see my *Rgvedic Studies*: I, in the Bulletin of the D. C. R. I. Vol. II, 3-4.

NOTES:—The self-luminous Ones are Varuṇa, Mitra and Arya-man (compare IV. 39. 3). [*Aditiḥ* is a puzzle and is taken as corrupt by many scholars. I have given above a rendering which, to my mind, is the most natural one. A discussion of this difficulty is not germane to the matter in hand]. The mention of *vrata*s as something ruled over should, in my opinion, show that 'region, dominion, sphere of activity or movement' should be a proper rendering thereof.

§ 55. IX. 35. 6 :—

विश्वो यस्य व्रते जनो.

दाधार धर्मेणस्पतेः ।

पुनानस्य प्रभवंसोः ॥

Trans :—Under whose dominion (*vrata*), lord of holy ordinance and most rich, as he is being purified, the people all, hold on (safe).

NOTES :—*punānāsya* (as he is being purified) is important because Soma has a long way (or *vrata*) to go, in the process of purification. The 9th maṇḍala of the RV., in fact, consists of incantations sung over the tangible Soma while it is pressed by the stones, and flows through the woolen strainer into the wooden vats (and so on) until it is finally offered to the gods or into the fire. People are safe during all these processes i. e. under the auspices, jurisdiction or influence of the Soma that is being purified.

§ 56. I. 31. 12 :—

[त्वं नो अग्ने तव देव पायुभिः

मुषोनो रक्ष तन्वश्च वन्य ।]

व्राता लोकस्य तनये गवाम-

स्यनिषेधं रक्षमाणस्तव व्रते ॥

Trans :—(Thou, O Agni) art the protector of kith and kin, (and) of kine, guarding (them) unceasingly within thy *vrata* (i. e. dominion).

NOTES :—*Tānaye* is nothing else but *tānayasya* which would have one syllable too many as Oldenberg¹⁸ puts it, but I cannot agree with his rendering 'watching over thy law' which construes the locative (*vratē*) as an accusative! The object for '*rāksamānah*' must be understood from the preceding pāda viz. 'kith and kin.'

THE MORE IMPORTANT PASSAGES WHERE THE MEANING D₅ IS APPROPRIATE

[D₅=(Triumphant) march or movement, (victorious) advance or activity, exploit, performance, deed or act (of valour or strength)].

§ 57 VIII. 42. 1 :—

अस्तेभ्राद् यामसुरो विश्वेवेदा
अमिमीत वरिमाणं पृथिव्याः ।
आसीद् विश्वा भुवनानि सुभ्राद्
विश्वेद् तानि वरुणस्य ब्रूतानि ॥

Trans :—The All-possessor, the *Āsura*, propped up heaven, measured out the expanse of the earth; as Sovereign Lord, he approached all beings (or occupied all the world)—*all these* are the *vrātās* (the *deeds* or *exploits*) of Varuṇa.

NOTES :—The context, in my opinion, leaves no doubt as to the meaning assigned to the word above, as the *vrātās* as such, are specifically enumerated in the first three *pādas* of the verse !

§ 58. IX. 53. 3 :—

अस्य ब्रूतानि नाधृषे
पवमानस्य दृढ्या ।
रुज यस्त्वा पृतन्यति ॥

Trans :—The *vrātās* of this (Soma) Pavamāna (are) not to be challenged by (any) evil-minded one ; break him who seeks to fight thee.

NOTES :—The context shows that *vrātās* must represent some *movement* or advance of Soma *which alone can be talked of, as likely to be resisted*. Besides, the words :*ādhr̥ṣe* (to be challenged) and *pṛtan-yāti* show that *vrātās* are *not* such a mild and passive thing as 'laws' or 'ordinances,' the violation of which will meet with *retribution at a later stage* ! *Violating them is equivalent to challenging them or fighting with Soma*. So (i) movements or (ii) fixed laws of movement or (iii) exploits, deeds or acts, are the possible meanings of *vrātā*, the last being the most suitable. Compare VI. 7.5ab, where almost in these same words, we are told that 'none dared challenge the mighty *vrātās* of Agni Vaiśvānara.'

§ 59. VI. 7. 5 :—

वैश्वानरु त्व तानि ब्रूतानि
महान्यग्ने नकिराद्धर्ष ।

यज्जायमानः पित्रोरुपस्थे-
ऽविन्दः केतुं वयुनेष्वह्नाम् ॥

Trans:—Those great *vratās* (*advances*) of thine, O Vaisvānara no one could challenge, when, emerging to life in the laps of thy parents, thou didst attain to light, in the established order of days.

NOTES:—Here the marches of the Universal Agni, in its celestial aspect, across the fixed routes of the sky are evidently referred to. It is interesting to note that almost in the same words the *vratās* of Soma Payamāna are described in IX. 53. 3ab as unchallengeable: *asya vratāni nādhyṣe pāvamānasya*..... Our verse by identifying the *vratās* with the act of attaining to light while being born, as it were explains the word as meaning “the triumphant advance or exploit” (of Agni).

§ 60. III. 6. 5 :—

ब्रता ते अग्ने महतो महानि
तव क्रत्वा रोदसी आ ततन्थ ।
त्वं द्रुतो अभवो जायमान-
स्त्वं नेता वृषभ चर्षणीनाम् ॥

Trans :—The *vratās* of thee, the great, O Agni, are great ; through thy power, thou hast extended the two worlds ; (while) being born, thou becamest a messenger ; the leader of the tribes, (becamest) thou. O Bull !

NOTES :—The context shows that the *vratās* mentioned in the first *pāda* are enumerated in the next three *pādas*. They are the usual wonderful deeds viz. the spreading out of the worlds, *playing the messenger*¹⁹ even during the process of birth and becoming a leader etc. So the meaning ‘exploits, deeds, performances, feats’ is the only applicable one.

§ 61. VIII. 1. 27ab :—

य एको अस्ति दंसना
महाँ उग्रो अभि ब्रतैः ।
[गमद् स जिघ्री न स योषदा गमद्
धवं न परि वर्जति ॥]

Trans:—He (i. e. Indra) who stands alone, by his wonderful power [or deed viz. the killing of Vṛtra, and the simultaneous release of light and the waters], who is great and mighty by his *vratās*....

19. This almost suggests that the smoke rising to heaven while Agni was being produced by friction was evidence of his duties as a messenger to the ancients

NOTES :—What are the *vrātās* of Indra by which he becomes great? Surely they could not be 'holy vows or observances or laws which he follows or, imposes on his devotees, but the *exploits or deeds, attributed to Indra*, one of which is the excavating of paths for the Waters with his bolt and making them flow along those far-extending paths (Cf. II. 15. 3bc). Further VII. 47. 3c tells us that the waters do not miss his *vrātās*. So virtually the 'exploits (or *vrātās*)' of Indra are easily determined as great feats like the 'digging out of channels for the Rivers', which are eloquent testimony of his mightiness.

§ 62. VII. 6. 2cd :—

[कविं केतुं धासिं भानुमद्रेः
हिन्वन्ति शं राज्यं रोदस्योः ।]
पुरंदरस्य गीर्भिरा विवासे
अग्नेर्ब्रतानि पृथ्वा महानि ॥

Trans :—With songs, I invite (or seek to win for myself) the *vrātās* of Agni, the *Fort-destroyer*—(those) ancient and mighty (*vrātās*).

NOTES :—There should be no doubt about the meaning 'exploits, deeds, performances, acts etc' of *vrātā* here, in view of the epithet *purāṇdarā*, an epithet which Agni receives two or three times in all in the RV., though it is primarily appropriate to Indra. It is noteworthy that Macdonell²⁰ actually renders the substance of our passages as follows :—'Agni performed great *deeds* of old (7, 6, 2)' [italics mine]. Scholars thus have seen that *vrātā* must be translated in some places, in some such way but they have not seen that this meaning can by no stretch of imagination be connected with the root 2 *vr*, to choose or the root, 1 *vr*, to enclose !

OTHER 'D₂' PASSAGES

§ 63. X. 65. 6 :—

या गौर्वर्तनिं पुर्येति निष्कृतं पयो दुहाना व्रतनीरुवारतः ।
सा प्रब्रुवाणा वरुणाय द्वाक्षुषे देवेभ्यो दाशद्धविषां विवस्वते ॥

Trans :—The cow who circumambulates the appointed place, making her way hither, yielding milk, the leader of the *vrātās*, she speaking aloud to the *worshipper of Varuna* (*Varuṇāya dāśūṣe*) shall wait upon Vivasvat and the gods with oblations.

NOTES :—I entirely agree with the view of Oldenberg²¹ that the cow (here and) in the parallel passage III. 7. 2. is the *Dawn* which daily returns in her due way. For our *niṣkṛtām*, compare I. 123. 9 which represents the Dawn as coming to the *niṣkṛtām*. It should be obvious that the Dawn is pre-eminently the leader of the Luminous ways (*vratāni*) as Sūrya (is aptly) the keeper of the *vratās* (*vratapā*). The expression *Vārunāya dāsūṣe* and my translation of it should be noted as I interpret *dhṛtāvratāya dāsūṣe* in I. 25. 6 in the same way.

§ 64. VIII. 32. 28 :—

यो विश्वान्यभि ब्रता
सोमस्य मदे अन्धंसः ।
इन्द्रो देवेषु चेताति ॥

Trans :—Indra, who *among the gods*, looks after all the *vratās*, in the exhilaration of the Soma juice.

NOTES :—It is clear that it is the *vratās* of the gods that are to be taken care of by Indra, viz. their regular (movements or) paths because Indra made a pathway for the Sun (X. 111. 3) and channels for the rivers (X. 89. 7) and directed the action of the waters downwards (II. 17. 5). Compare also II. 15. 3 where (we are told) that Indra in the *exhilaration brought on by the Soma, dug out long channels for the Rivers*. The phrase 'in the exhilaration of the Soma' shows that 'looking after the *vratās*' was a strenuous job and not a soft one like 'observing holy laws' for which *sobriety* would be a better qualification than *intoxication*.

§ 65. I. 84. 12 cde :—

[ता अस्य नमसा सहः
सपर्यन्ति प्रचेतसः ।]
ब्रतान्यस्य साश्चिरे
पुस्तानि पूर्वचित्तये
वस्वीरतु स्वराज्यम् ॥

Trans :—They [the cows dear to Indra (V. 11)] follow his (i. e. Indra's) many *vratās*, for pre-eminence, strong in their own supremacy.

NOTES :—The cows associated with Indra may represent the waters or rain-clouds or the morning beams [or the red clouds of Dawn (according to Bergaigne²²)]. Whatever view we accept, the

21. SBE. Vol. 46, p. 250.

22. Religion Vedique, I. 245.

vratās they follow cannot but be the common path or paths followed by the heavenly waters and the luminaries (the gods) in heaven as explained in the notes to VIII. 32.28 (§ 64).

§ 66. II. 24. 12ab :—

विश्वं सत्यं संवदन्ना युवोरिद्
आपश्चन प्र मिनन्ति व्रतं वांम् ।
[अश्वेन्द्रब्रह्मणस्पती हविर्नो-
ऽसं युजेव वाजिनो जिगातम् ॥]

Trans :—All *satya* [Truth] (proceeds) from you two (i.e. Brahmanaspati and Indra), O Ye Bountiful Ones; even the waters do not miss your *vrata*.

NOTES :—Here the meaning of *vrata* is “the route or track dug out by Indra for the heavenly waters”, which is identical with the path of the luminaries. This meaning is the same as in the other passages where the *waters* are described as following the paths or *vratās* of Indra [See notes to VIII. 32. 28 ; I. 84. 12 etc.].

§ 67. I. 62. 10ab :—

सनात् सनीला अवनीरवाता
व्रता रक्षन्ते अमृताः सहोभिः ।
[पुरु सहस्रा जनयो न पत्नी—
देवस्यन्ति स्वसारो अह्रयाणम् ॥]

Trans :—The unconquerable rivers having a common nest (or abode) from of old, the immortal ones, keep to their *vratās* with (all) their strength.

NOTES :—A ‘common abode’ might mean either ‘a common source’ or a ‘a common bed’. The meaning of *vratās* as ‘the fixed tracks’ of the heavenly rivers or waters is hardly in doubt, if it is remembered that this is a *hymn to Indra*. (See notes to VIII. 32. 28).

§ 68. III. 32. 8 :—

इन्द्रस्य कर्म सुकृता पुरुणि
व्रतानि देवा न मिनन्ति विश्वे ।
दाधार यः पृथिवीं वासुतेमां
जजान सूर्यमुषसं सुदंसाः ॥

Trans :—Well-done and numerous are the deeds of Indra. Not (even) all the gods miss the *vratās* (of Indra), who supports the earth and this heaven. The wonder-worker has created *sūrya* and *uṣas*.

NOTES :—As this passage speaks of the *gods* following the *vratās* of Indra [who killed Vṛtra, set the waters (aerial and celestial also)

free (v. 6,) who won the light, placed the sun in the sky and *made a path for it* (X. 111. 3)], *vrata* can only be the path or paths opened out and thereafter prescribed for the movements of the gods or the luminaries like the Dawn and the Sun by Indra.

§ 69. III. 7. 7 :—

अध्वर्युभिः पञ्चभिः सप्त विप्राः

प्रियं रक्षन्ते निहितं पदं वेः ।

प्राञ्चो मदन्त्युक्षणो अजुर्या

देवा देवानामनु हि ब्रता शुः ॥

Trans :—With the five *adhvaryus*, the seven priests watch the (well-) laid beloved footstep of the *Bird*. Moving forwards, the never-aging bulls (flames of Agni?) rejoice; for, as gods, they have followed the *vratās* of the gods.

NOTES:—The *Bird* is, in my opinion, the Sun, (with which Agni is identified). I follow Oldenberg²³ in taking the 'bulls' as the flames of Agni. In my view, the flames of Agni shooting forward correspond to the gods or luminaries in heaven going along their prescribed routes. The movements of the terrestrial Agni are also fixed in the sacrificial system and are its earthly *vratās*. And to do this effectively, the priests have to carefully watch the steps taken by the Sun.

§ 70. VII. 76. 5 :—

समाने कुर्वे अग्निं संगतासुः

सं जानते न यतन्ते मिथस्ते ।

ते देवानां न मिनन्ति ब्रतानि-

अमर्षन्तो वसुभि र्यादमानाः ॥

Trans :—Gathered in the same enclosure, they (the *Pitrs*) concur (and) do not strive with each other. They do not miss the *vratās* of the gods, rushing along with the *Vasus*, unharmed.

NOTES:—The fact that *yādamānāḥ* (rushing along)—present participle of the root *yād* (a verb of motion)—is used along with 'not missing the *vratās*', shows that the *vratās* are something, the *Pitrs* travel along and so, *the paths*. The significance of the expression 'not missing the *vratās*' and the character of the root *mi* or *mī* in *minanti* as a verb of motion, has been brought out in my notes to I. 25. 1.

§ 71. III. 60. 6cd :—

[इन्द्रं ऋभुमान् वाजवान् मत्स्वेह नो-
ऽस्मिन् त्सर्वे शक्या पुरुष्टुत ।]
इमानि तुभ्यं स्वसराणि येमिरे
व्रता देवानां मनुषश्च धर्माभिः ॥

Trans :—These dwelling-places as well as *vratās* [*wandering-places* (or *the fixed pathways*)] of gods and men have offered themselves to thee, (O Indra), according to order (*dhārmabhiḥ*).

NOTES :—Here '*vratā*' is contrasted with *svāsarāṇi* (= abodes or stalls) and therefore should mean 'the prescribed paths along which gods and men move' i. e. the scene of *movement* or *dynamic activity* as distinguished from *the scene of (static) residence*.

§ 72. V. 69. 4 :—

या धर्ताश्च रजसो रोचनस्योत-
आदित्या दिव्या पार्थिवस्य ।
न वां देवा अमृता आ मिनन्ति
व्रतानि मित्रावरुणा ध्रुवाणि ॥

Trans :—You (two), O Ādityas divine! who (are) the upholders of the luminous space, of the terrestrial (space), your eternal *vratās*, O Mitra and Varuṇa, the immortal gods do not miss.

Notes :—I have already drawn attention, in my notes to I. 25. 1 and VII. 31.11, to the passage : I. 124.3cd = V. 80.4cd, where we get the meaning of '*nā.....minanti*.' The eternal *pathways* laid down by M. and V. are the *vratās*, the gods never miss. The context shows here (as in other verses) that the *vratās* were laid down after the propping up of heaven (referred to significantly as the luminous space) and earth. Compare V. 85.5, where Varuṇa is described as measuring out the earth *with the Sun as a measure* and VIII. 42. 1 where this measuring out of the expanse of the earth takes place *simultaneously with* the supporting of heaven. Laying down the *vratās* is a cosmic function, hardly distinguishable from the establishing of heaven and earth.

§ 73. I. 22. 19 :—

विष्णोः कर्माणि पश्यत
यतो व्रतानि पस्पशे ।
इन्द्रस्य युज्यः सखा ॥

Trans :—Witness the works of Viṣṇu, since he, the intimate friend of Indra, has seen the *vratās*.

NOTES:—The 'karmāni are the same as the *viryaṇi* of Viṣṇu who measured out the terrestrial regions, established heaven and who, having wide-paced, strode out triply (I. 154. 1). It should follow then, that he, associated as he is with Indra, in the killing of Vṛtra and the winning of light, should be described as *having seen and then revealed the routes of the luminaries* (across heaven) *which were blocked until Vṛtra was killed*; besides, seeing (in a physical sense) is only possible in the case of something *tangible* like the paths (of light) or *vratās*.

§ 74. V. 66. 2 :—

ता हि क्षत्रमविद्धुतं
सम्यगसूर्यमाशोते ।
अथ ब्रूतेव मानुषं
स्वर्णं धायि दर्शतम् ॥

Trans:—For, the (two Mitra and Varuṇa) have well attained inviolate, divine (or spiritual) *kṣatrā* (dominion) and the human (*kṣatrā*) is made beautiful like the sun; (made beautiful) like the *vratās*.

NOTES:—As regards the second half, I follow the construction of Oldenberg²⁴ who, in my opinion, has hit the bull's eye. Whatever the construction, however, it is undeniable that '*vratā*' is here parallel to *svār* (the sun), both being the standards of comparison in point of beauty or brilliance. It follows then, that *vratā* must be the *luminous paths* traced by the luminaries in the heavens.

§ 75. X. 13. 3ab :—

पञ्च पदानि रूपो अन्वरोहं
चतुष्पदीमन्वेमि ब्रूतेन ।
[अक्षरेण प्रति मिम एताम्
ऋतस्य नामावधिं सं पुनामि ॥]

Trans :—Five steps along the ascent (*rupāḥ*), have I ascended. I follow the four-footed one, along the *vratā*;

NOTES :—I follow Bloomfield²⁵ in the interpretation of *rup*. The four-footed one is the same as the '*gaurīh*' of I. 164. 41, the *buffalo* or the *rain-cloud*, who appears as one footed, or two-footed or four-footed, from different points of view in the Rv. This verse is not as obscure as it is thought to be; but it is not the purport of the present mono-

24. Rgveda: Text Kritische and Exegetische Noten.

25. JAOS. XXVII., 14 ff.

graph to discuss the whole verse except where it is necessary for determining the meaning of *vrata* and from the first two pādas translated above, it is clear that '*vrata*' must mean the 'track' along which alone, the rain-cloud can be followed !

§ 76. VIII. 67. 13 :—

ये सूर्धानः क्षितीनाम्-

अदन्धासुः स्वयंशसः ।

व्रता रक्षन्ते अद्भुतः ॥

Trans :—(The Ādityas) who, as overlords of the settlements, undeceivable and self-famous, guard the *vratās* (paths), untouched by hate.

NOTES :—Though, here, the meaning 'statutes' will do, there can be no objection to our meaning, which suits the verse equally well. The point, is that like the *dhṛtāvratā* Varuṇa, many a god (or gods) is described as performing the duty of guarding the fixed paths of the *devās* across the heavens—a duty, necessary because of the danger from the forces of Darkness, like *Ūtra*.

§ 77. VI. 15. 9ab :—

विभूषणम् उभयौ अनु व्रता

दूतो देवानां रजसी समीपसे ।

[यत् ते धीतिं सुमतिमावृणमिहे

ऽधं स्मा नस्त्रिवरुथः शिवो भव ॥]

Trans :—Making them (i. e. the *rays*) both (white and dark), in accordance with the *vratās*, O Agni, thou, the envoy of the gods, goest over the two worlds.

NOTES :—I interpret this passage in the light of VIII.41.10, where Varuṇa is described as making the 'robed ones' (i. e. the *rays*), white or dark according to the *vratās*. The important point is that in accordance with the '*vratās*' or tracks followed, the worlds are robed in light or darkness. Thus '*vratās*' signifies not only the *tracks* above the earth which, when followed by the luminaries, bathe the world in light, but also the *tracks* below the earth. When the luminaries follow these latter, the world is immersed in darkness. This characteristic feat of Varuṇa is here attributed to Agni. This interpretation follows the pada-pāṭha view of *ubhāyām* as *ubhāyān*. As against this, Oldenberg (Noten) prefers *ubhāyā* (neuter) as the rendering. This raises the possibility of another construction: *ubhāyā* (neut.) might go with *rājasī*, in which case the general sense remains

the same. If it is taken independently, whether as neuter (according to Oldenberg) or masc., according to the padapāṭha, we might supply 'jātān' as in IV. 2. 2 (a verse to Agni which is closely parallel in contents to our verse) meaning, "gods and men" = (the two types of creation—divine and human). The translation would then be:—"Regulating both (gods and men) in accordance with your *vratās*." Our view of *vratā* is not affected, however, by this difference of interpretation because it is natural to suppose that Agni, the envoy of the gods, traverses both the worlds, regulating gods and men, according to the paths he follows, on earth and in heaven.

§ 78. V. 2. 8 (X. 32. 6bcd = V. 2. 8bcd):—

हृणीयमानो अप हि मदेयेः

प्र मे देवानां व्रतपा उवाच ।

इन्द्रो विद्वान् अनु हि त्वा चुचक्षुः

तेनाहमग्ने अनुशिष्ट आगां ॥

Trans:—(a) For, getting angry, thou hast gone away from me; (b) the *vratapā* (keeper of the *vratās*) of the gods has declared (this) to me; (c) since Indra, the knowing one, looked after thee, (d) instructed by him, O Agni, have I come.

NOTES:—Pādas *b*, *c*, and *d* of this verse are identical with the corresponding ones of X. 32. 6, the first two pādas of which may be translated thus:—(b) The *vratapā* of the gods has declared (thee), (a) as lying concealed within the waters.

The two verses are mutually explanatory. The *vratapā* of the gods is, in my view, *Sūrya* (as seen from I. 83. 5 and VI. 8. 2), he bearing that character in a pre-eminent manner. Whether this story of Agni's concealment is another version of the Sun sleeping in darkness, in the lap of *Nīrti* (I. 117. 5) or whether this is a description of the winter-sun or the sun sunk in the nether world of waters and darkness—a discussion of these points is not necessary for our purpose. It is enough to note that the context shows that *vratapā* means 'keeper of the paths', which role alone can enable the Sun to declare the whereabouts of Agni.

§ 79. In I. 31. 10 and VIII. 11. 1, Agni is designated *vratapāḥ*; the keeper or guardian of the *vratās*. If the other '*vratapā*' passages such as I. 83. 5; VI. 8. 2; V. 2. 8, and X. 32. 6. (which see) are considered in this connection, it should be evident that the epithet is transferred from Agni in his celestial aspect or Agni identical with the Sun, to Agni in his terrestrial aspect. Thus the *vratās* or paths

of the luminaries including the celestial Agni in heaven, have their counterpart in the paths followed by the terrestrial Agni.

In X. 61. 7cd, we are told that the gods fashioned *Vāstospāti*—the *vratapā*, along with prayer (*brāhma*). The passage is inconclusive for our purpose. I may only state my theory (which I do not want to press here) that though *vāstospāti* as 'Lord of the dwelling' is undoubtedly a *tutelary deity of the house*, it seems to be identified in our passage with the Sun (the *vratapā* in I. 83. 5, and VI. 8. 2) the Lord of the *dwelling*, the latter word being used in the extended sense of 'the whole universe'.

§ 80. VI. 70. 3d :—

[यो वामृजवे कर्मणाय रोदसी
मर्ते ददाश धिषणे स साधति ।
प्र प्रजाभिर्जायते धर्मणस्परि]
युवोः सिक्ता विष्टरूपाणि सव्रता ॥

Trans :—[Whatever mortal, O *Rodasi*, makes offerings in honour of your straight career (*rjāve krāmaṇāya*), O Heaven and earth, he succeeds; he prospers with progeny in accordance with (holy) law; from you two, are poured (favours), diverse in form but following an identical *vratā*.

NOTES :—Since 'the favours' following the same *vratā* are described as *siktā*, (flowing down, sprinkled down), *vratā* can only mean 'channel, passage, path or way' like the *vratā* of Parjanya [the Rain-cloud personified (V. 83. 5)]. Compare also III. 59. 9c=*īṣa iṣṭāvratā akah*..

I have translated the first three *pādas* of the verse (though they were not relevant to our *vratā* passage) in order to show that in the R̥gveda, heaven and earth are sufficiently personified to be conceived as *having motion* (cf 'straight career' above). Elsewhere, they are said to be *coming* to their worshippers along with the heavenly folk (VII. 53. 2), taking the sacrifice to the gods (II. 24. 20) or as seating themselves around the sacrifice (IV. 56. 2, 7). This is why I have connected *rjāve krāmaṇāya* with *heaven and earth* and not with the worshipper. This aspect of *rodasi* may be borne in mind, in considering their *vratā*, spoken of in the passage X.65. 8 (which is discussed below).

OTHER D₄ PASSAGES

§ 81. I. 69. 4ab :—

नकिंष्ट पुता व्रता भिनन्ति
नृभ्यो यदेभ्यः श्रुष्टिं चकथ ।
[तत् तु ते दंसो यदहन्समानै-
नृभिर्यद् युक्तो विवे रपांसि ॥]

Trans :—None miss *those (etā) vratās* of thine, (which you followed), when thou didst pay heed to these men.

NOTES :—If we consider the other passages where the phrase *śruṣtim kr* (= to pay heed to, to attend to) occurs viz. VIII. 18. 6, 10 and II. 14. 9, we find that this act of paying heed to, is *inseparable* from some activity or movement or effort involved in the act. It is natural, therefore, to conclude (in our passage) that Agni's *vratās* at the time of paying heed to men, represent *some activity, some movement* on the part of Agni such as the journey to the worshipper's home. In favour of this, may be pointed out that the *etā* (*these vratās*) actually connects the *vratās* with the effort necessary for listening to the summons of men.

§ 82. VIII. 25. 16 :—

अयमेकं इत्था पुरु-
रुचष्टे वि विश्पतिः ।
तस्य व्रतान्यनु वश्चरामसि ॥

Trans :—This one, the lord of the tribes (i. e. Varuṇa) thus looks about, far and wide. His *vratās* do we follow after, in your interests.

NOTES :—The character of the verb *ānu-car*, as one of motion, used along with *vratāni* has a legitimate value in pointing out its fundamental sense and favours its interpretation as a word of motion. So *vratāni* = 'periodical rounds', 'daily, monthly or seasonal appearances', 'regularly recurring movements or visits (of Varuṇa to the worshipper's sacrifice).' My notes to I. 25. 1. furnish additional grounds for this view (see the next section, § 83).

§ 83. I. 25. 1 :—

यच्चिद्धि ते विशो यथा
प्र देव वरुण व्रतम् ।
मिनीमसि यदिवयि ॥

Trans :—Whatever *vratā* of thine, like the common people, we (might) miss, day after day, O God Varuṇa—.

NOTES :—The sense of *prá...minimāsi* (as a verb of motion) is seen, in my opinion, in I. 124. 3cd=V. 80. 4cd :—*ṛtasya pānthām ānveti sādhuḥ, prajānātīva na diśo munāti* = ‘she (the Dawn) follows closely the path of ṛtá; as one who knows (the way), she does not miss the directions.’ The speaker, the priest, has to carefully anticipate and note the periodical movements or the seasonal appearances of the various gods at the place of worship, as it is his duty to synchronize these with a fixed sacrificial performance or minor ritualistic procedure, the annual *satras* e. g. being an imitation of the Sun’s yearly course. *Viśo yāthā* has been rendered often as ‘men as we are’, wrongly, in my opinion. The priest places himself in a category higher than that of the ordinary folk; besides, it is not proper to comprise the *upameya* (the speaker, the priest speaking on behalf of himself and the sacrificer) within the *upamāna*—the *viśah*, the masses as such, who not being expected to be well-up in the highly specialized Vedic Calendar, were likely to miss those *vratās* i. e. the periodical visits of the deities to sacrificial performances or ritual procedure which synchronized with them, in the course of the year and which were exactly timed to celebrate, for example, the periodical and annually recurring victories of Indra and Varuṇa over the forces of darkness like Vṛtra and the consequent release of light and the waters.

§ 84. II. 28. 2 :—

तव व्रते सुभगांसः स्याम
स्वाध्यां वरुण तुष्टुवासः ।
उपायनं उषसां गोमतीनाम्
अग्रयो न जरमाणा अनु यून् ॥

Trans :—May we, (found) well-attentive and praising at thy *vratā*, become prosperous like the fires resounding (with praise) at the approach of the Dawns, rich in cows, day after day.

NOTES :—The simile is perfect—a *pūrnopamā*. The poet compares himself in the act of praising, to the fires crackling with praise and prays that he may prosper like the latter when they are kindled into a blaze. ‘At thy *vratā*’ must therefore correspond to ‘at the approach (*upāyane*) of the Dawns. So, *vratā* is the periodical appearance at (or visit to) the worshipper’s sacrifice where the poet is eager to celebrate the approach of Varuṇa with hymns and songs of praise. The epithet *svādhyāh* is significant. The poet must not be caught napping, at the arrival of Varuṇa and thus must not miss his *vratā*.

§ 85. I. 24. 15 :—

उदुत्तमं वरुण पाशमस्मद्-
अवाधमं वि मध्यमं श्रथाय ।
अथा वयमादित्य व्रते तवा-
नागसो अदितये स्याम ॥

Trans:—Slacken (lit. throw up) the highest bond (away) from us, throw down the lowest (one), sever the middle one, O Varuṇa and so, O Āditya, let us remain sinless before *Aditi* at thy *vratā*.

NOTES:—The meaning of *vratā*, here, is the same that I have assigned to the word in II. 28. 2. (which please see in § 84.) viz. the periodical appearance of Varuṇa in heaven, coincident with his approach or visit to the place of worship, in the vision of the poet-priest.

§ 86. III. 54. 18 :—

अर्यमा णो अदितिर्यज्ञियासो
ऽदब्धानि वरुणस्य व्रतानि ।
युयोते नो अनपत्यानि गन्तौः
प्रजावाञ्चः पशुमौ अस्तु गातुः ॥

Trans:—Aryaman (and) Aditi are to us worthy of worship. Inviolable are the *vratās* of Varuṇa. Take off from our (course) career, (the curse of) childlessness; and may our path abound in offspring and kine.

NOTES:—The meaning of *vratā* here is the same as in II. 28. 2, and I. 24. 10c and in I. 25. 1; viz. the periodical movements or seasonal appearances of *Varuṇa*, in heaven and at the worshipper's *sabode*.

§ 87. III. 30. 4 :—

त्वं हि ष्मा च्यावयन्नच्युतान्य-
एको वृत्रा चरसि जिघ्रमानः ।
तव यावापृथिवी पर्वतासो-
ऽस्तु व्रताय निमित्तिव तस्थुः ॥

Trans:—Thou, indeed, unsettling the settled ones, movest alone, hitting the enemies. Heaven and Earth, (and) the mountains (as well), stay, erected, as it were, to conform to your *vratā* (movement, customary activity or career).

NOTES:—The point is, that Indra in his mobility has to displace many *firmly fixed* objects and beings but not the mountains nor Heaven and Earth who form no obstacle to, nor present any opposition to the movements of Indra and therefore 'stay put' as it were.

§ 88. VII. 31. 11 :—

उरुव्यचसे महिने सुवृक्तिम्
इन्द्रोऽयं ब्रह्म जनयन्त विप्राः ।
तस्य ब्रतानि न भिनन्ति धीराः ॥

Trans :—For the far-extending, glorious Indra, the priests have brought forth prayer and a beautiful song; the wise never miss his *vratās*. [For pāda c, compare III. 56. 1ab].

NOTES :—As explained in my notes to I. 25. 1, *vratā* can have the double meaning: (1) the fixed or periodical rounds or seasonal and regular appearances of the *devās* in *heaven* coinciding with their annually recurring victories over the forces of evil or (2) the periodical visits of the gods like Agni and Indra to the home of the worshipper, to attend the ritual offerings (e. g. the mid-day libation which is specially ear-marked for Indra) to which they are invited. It was the duty of the wise (priests) not to miss the proper season or times of such *vratās* of the gods but to celebrate *them with prayer and song*.

§ 89. III. 56. 1 :—

न ता भिनन्ति मायिनो न धीरां
ब्रता देवानां प्रथमा ध्रुवाणि ।
न रोदसी अद्भुता वेद्याभि-
र्न पर्वता निनमे तस्थिवांसः ॥

Trans :—Neither those possessed of magic power, nor those possessed of wisdom (*dhīrāḥ*), miss (or violate) the primaeval and eternal *vratās* of the gods. Neither Heaven and Earth who are above hate nor the mountains are (apt) to bend in any noticeable manner (*vedyābhiḥ*, adv.)

NOTES :—Heaven and Earth and the Mountains are here represented as conforming to the *vratās* (movements or customary activity) of the gods (by not bending), exactly as they are said to conform to the *vratā* (movement or customary activity) of Indra, in III. 30. 4. If the *māyinaḥ* and *dhīrāḥ* of pāda a, refer to two classes of *men*, then there is a parallel in VII. 31. 11c. ('*dhīrāḥ*'). It is, however, more likely that the two words refer to two classes of *gods*, one relying on 'magic' and the other on 'wisdom'. In this case it is perfectly natural to construe that no class of gods misses the divine *vratās*.

§ 90. X. 12. 5ab :—

किं स्विन्नो राजा जगृहे कदस्या-
ति व्रतं चकृमा को वि वेद ।
[मित्रश्चिद्धि ष्मा जुहुराणो देवान्-
द्वल्लोको न यातामपि बाजो अस्ति ॥]

Trans :—Why, pray, hath the King (i. e. Varuṇa) caught hold of us? What have we done beyond (i. e. contrary to) his *vrata*? Who knows?

NOTES :—The meaning of *vrata* is the same as in II. 28. 2 or I. 25. 1 (which please see). See also notes to X. 2. 4 where Agni is implored by the poet, to make good whatever *vratas* of the gods might have been missed by him, ignorant as he is.

§ 91. II. 38. 3d :—

[आशुभिश्चिद्यान् वि मुचाति नूनम्
अरीरिमदतमानं चिदेतोः ।
अहर्षूणां चिन्त्ययाँ अविष्याम्]
अनु व्रतं सवितुर्मोक्षयागात् ॥

II. 38. 6 :—

समाववति विष्टितो जिगीषु-
विश्वेषां कामश्चरताममाभूत् ।
शश्वौ अपो विकृतं हित्वयागाद्
अनु व्रतं सवितुर्देव्यस्य ॥

Trans :—(V. 3d) : The night has come in accordance with the *vrata* of Savitr. (V. 6) : The (would—be) conqueror, going places returns; the mind (lit. wish) of all travellers becomes homeward-bound; one and all have come (back), leaving (their) work half-done in accordance with the *vrata* of Savitr.

NOTES :—The word in both places, means evidently ‘the fixed laws of movement or periodical appearance to which Savitr himself conforms,’ or his customary activity. Savitr is connected with evening as well as morning and in the present hymn (II. 38) he is extolled as the setting Sun. Our meaning of *vrata* here, gets support from I. 35. 11 which says that ‘his ancient paths are in the atmosphere, dustless and easy to traverse’. When he completes this journey, night arrives.

§ 92. IV. 13. 2 :—

उर्ध्वं भानुं सविता देवो अश्रेद्
इप्सं दर्विध्वद् गविषो न सत्त्वा ।
अनु व्रतं वरुणो यन्ति मित्रो
यत् सूर्यं दिव्यारोहयन्ति ॥

Trans:—Upwards has god Savitr sent his light, waving his banner like a warrior fighting for cows. Varuṇa and Mitra (but) follow the *vrata*, when they mount the sun in heaven.

NOTES:—The shining of the sun is here inseparably connected with M. and V. following the *vrata* i. e. their fixed procedure or movement, their (*self-imposed*) duty or their customary activity. In other words, the conformity of Mitra and Varuṇa with their self-imposed laws of movement in heaven, automatically raises the sun to heaven, to illumine the world.

§ 93. X. 37. 5ab :—

विश्वस्य हि प्रेषितो रक्षसि व्रतम्
अहेळयन्नुच्चरासि स्वधा अनु ।
[यद्य त्वा सूर्योपब्रवीमहे
तं नो देवा अनु मंसीरतु कर्तुम् ॥]

Trans:—Sent forth, thou dost protect the *vrata* (prescribed or ordered activity) of the universe; unperturbed, dost thou rise, in thy native manner.

NOTES:—The nature of the *vrata* (of the universe) of which *Sūrya* (the presiding deity of the Sun) is the guardian, is seen from verse 2cd of this same hymn; 'Whatever moves, settles down; always the waters move and the Sun rises.' Compare also v. 9ab = "Thou by whose light, all the world moves on and rests" etc.

§ 94. VIII. 41. 3 :—

स क्षपः परिं वस्वजे न्युक्नो मायया दधे
स विश्वं परिं दर्शतः ।
तस्य वेनीरतु व्रतमुपस्तिन्नो अवर्धयन्
नभस्तामन्युके समे ॥

Trans:—He has embraced the nights and with his occult power, set down the Dawns; he is visible around the whole world; his Dear Ones prospered the three Dawns (for him), in accordance with his *vrata*.

NOTES:—The Dear Ones are the Nights whom V. has embraced and who give place to the three Dawns [the *udeṣyat* (one about to rise), the *udyat* (the rising Dawn) and the *uditā* (one that has risen)]. The *vratā* evidently refers to the law of movement, the prescribed mode of appearance and disappearance followed by Varuṇa, his well-regulated or customary activity. This verse, taken along with others, suggests that Varuṇa was the lord of the nights or Darkness or the waters in the bondage of Darkness in general. [See my notes to VIII. 41. 7.]

§ 95. IX. 69. 1cd :—

इषुर्न धन्वन् प्रति धीयते मति
व्रत्सो न मातुरुप सज्युर्धनि ।
उरुधारेव दुहे अग्र आयत्यु-
अस्य व्रतेष्वपि सोम इष्यते ॥

Trans :—[Like an arrow on the bow, has the (pious) thought been fixed (on the object of adoration); a calf has, as it were, been loosed to the udder of its mother]; as one wide-streaming (with milk), [*urū-dhārā*] she is milked, coming first; Soma is urged (or pressed) at the *vratās* of this (?) One.

NOTES:—Oldenberg²⁶ thinks, *asya* refers to Soma. This is not likely. If we consider all the three *urū-dhārā* passages in the RV. (the present passage being one of them), the conclusion is inevitable that *asya* refers to Indra. Compare VIII. 1. 10, where Indra is (directly) called the wide-streaming (*urū-dhārā*) richly-yielding *dhenū* (milch-cow). Particularly helpful is VIII. 93. 3 :—

स न इन्द्रः शिवः सखाश्वावद्गोमयवमत् ।
उरुधारेव दोहते ॥

This can most naturally be rendered as :—That auspicious friend of ours, Indra, yields wealth in horses, kine and corn, like the wide-streaming one (i. e. *Dhenū*)

This should leave no doubt that Indra (Masc.) in our passage, could have a standard of comparison (like *urūdhārā dhenū*) in the Feminine gender. So *asya* refers to Indra and what is more natural than to suppose that Soma is urged (or pressed) at the *vratās* or the fixed rounds or visits of Indra to the worshipper's home? The mid-day *sāvana* or libation (lit. pressing) of Soma is peculiarly Indra's own *sāvana*.

§ 96. I. 70. 1cd :—

[वनेम पूर्विर्यो मनीषा
अग्निः सुशोको विश्वान्यस्याः ।]
आ दैव्यानि व्रता चिकित्वान्
आ मानुषस्य जनस्य जन्म ॥

Trans:—(Agni) who knows the *divine vratās* and the birth of the human race.

NOTES:—Here the *dāivyā vratā* are distinguished from and paralleled to the birth of humanity. It is clear then, that the *discovery* of the routes or laws of motion of the luminaries is as epoch-making an event as the birth of humanity. The removal of darkness and the arrival of the Dawn *manifesting* (or *making known*) the *divine vratās* or routes (Cf. VII. 75. 3c), were synchronus with the fresh life of humanity.

§ 97 X. 122. 2 :—

जुषाणो अग्ने प्रति हर्य मे वचो
विश्वानि विद्वान् वयुनानि सुक्रतो ।
धृतनिर्णिग्ब्रह्मणे गातुमेरय
तव देवा अजनयन्तु व्रतम् ॥

Trans:—Accepting my song, be gratified, O Agni, (with it), knowing, as thou dost, all the established orders (of things), O highly wise one!. Clad in *ghṛta*, set up a pathway for prayer (*brāhmaṇe*); the gods created (?) [*ajanayan*] in accordance with thy *vratā*.

NOTES:—The last *pāda* may be construed in two ways:—(1) On the analogy of X. 66. 9ab, we might supply *dyāvā-prthivī* etc., as object to *ajanayan*; or (2) we might understand *brāhmaṇ* from the third *pāda* as the object, translating.—The gods created (that *brāhmaṇ*) in conformity with your *vratā*. This gives us the beautiful idea viz. Agni is implored to set up a pathway for *brāhmaṇ*, (because) the gods have created (it) in conformity with the (well-known) laws of movement of Agni. Even if we take the first construction, the same meaning of *vratā* will do, because it is perfectly natural to say that the 'gods created heaven and earth, the holy trees, the waters, the plants, in conformity with the *vratā* (i. e. the fixed movements or career) of Agni' (which amounts to the same thing as saying: in conformity with the *divine vratās*). Compare IV. 3. 11, which says that the Sun became visible when Agni was born. Compare also VII. 5. 7; I. 96. 4 (Agni created heaven and earth) and VII. 5. 4 (heaven and earth follow Agni's *vratā*).

§ 98. III. 4. 7 :—

दैव्या होतारा प्रथमा न्यूञ्जे
सप्त पृक्षासः स्वधया मदन्ति ।
ऋतं शंसन्त ऋतमित् त आहुः
अनु व्रतं व्रतपा दीध्यानाः ॥

Trans :—I direct (towards myself) the two primeval divine Hotrs. The Seven (sacrificial-) food-bearing (priests) rejoice in their own way. Praising the *ṛtā*, they explain the *ṛtā*, the guardians of *vratā* (as they are), thinking over the *vratā*.

NOTES :—I agree with Pischel²⁷ in taking the seven *prkṣāsah* as the *angirāsas*. The seven priests are guardians of the *vratās* of the gods in general and of the two divine Hotrs in particular, in the sense that their sacrifices safeguard the gods in their pursuit of their eternally fixed movements (or *vratās*), against hostile forces like those of *Vṛtra*. In my opinion, worthy of investigation is the brilliant suggestion made by Tilak²⁸ that "the path of *ṛtā* (RV. I. 41. 4) which is mentioned several times in the RV., where the *Ādityas* are said to be placed (X. 85.1) and wherein *Saramā* discovered the cows of *Indra* (V. 45.7,8), refers to the same broad belt of the Zodiac which the luminaries, as observed by the Vedic bards, never transgressed. It was, so to speak their 'right' way and therefore called *ṛtā*, which though literally derived from *ṛ* to go, soon came to mean the 'right' path, the circle of which exists for ever, or rather exists and exists (*varvartī*) in the vault of the heavens (RV. I. 164.11)." I may point out further that in I. 124.3cd and V. 80.4cd, *uśas* is said to be following closely the path of *ṛtā* and not missing the directions. In my opinion, this may have been the original sense of *ṛtā* and our *vratā* or *vratās* were the fixed route or routes of the *devās* (or Luminaries) within the *ṛtā* or Zodiacal belt, across the *rajas*, above and below the earth.

§ 99. VIII. 48. 9cd :—

[त्वं हि नस्तुवः सोम गोपा
गात्रेगात्रे निषसत्या नृचक्षाः ।]
यत् ते वयं प्रमिनाम व्रतानि
स नो मूल सुषखा देव वस्यः ॥

Trans :—When we miss thy *vratās*, be gracious, O god (Soma) as a good friend, wealthier (than all).

27. *Vedische studien*, I. 96.

28. *The Orion*, P. 154

NOTES:—For the *vratās* of Soma, see my notes to VIII. 48. 8. and IX. 82. 5, where I have shown that the RV. poet loves to ring changes on the double character of Soma. Soma is a terrestrial plant and it is also celestial. At the very time the poet is describing the regular movements (*vratās*) of Soma, when he runs through *heaven* across the spaces with his stream (IX. 3. 7), he is thinking of his movements (*vratās*) on earth when the Soma passes through the filter and flows on to the vats. An example of this *quick-change art* is seen when *heaven* becomes the mystical name of the strainer of sheep's wool (IX. 12. 4) !

§ 100. X. 25. 3ab:—

उत व्रतानि सोम ते
प्राहं मिनामि पाक्या ।
[अथा पितेव सुनवे वि वो मदे
मृळा नो अभि चिद्वधाद्विवक्षसे ॥

Trans:—And O Soma, (if) I miss thy *vratās* through (my) simplicity, (in that case.....be gracious ...).

NOTES:—There is nothing to be added to my remarks on the word, under VIII. 48. 9cd (§ 99), as regards the *vratās* of Soma. For an explanation of the phrase '... *vratāni* ... *prā* ... *mināmi* ...,' see notes to I. 25. 1, where very nearly the same expression occurs. It should be noted that *simplicity* or *ignorance* is responsible for the mistakes. What else could this '*simplicity*' be, but the ignorance of the *laws of movement* or *appearances* in *heaven* of the celestial Soma or of the *various movements* of the terrestrial Soma, in the processes of purification at the Soma sacrifice ?

§ 101. VII. 87. 7abc:—

यो मृळयाति चुकृषे चिदागो
वयं स्याम वरुणे अनागाः ।
अनु व्रतान्वदितेऽर्धन्तो
[यूयं पात स्वास्तिभि सदा नः ॥]

Trans:—He, who shows mercy even to a sinner—before that Varuṇa, may we be sinless, following the *vratās* of Aditi.

NOTES:—For the *vratā* of Aditi described as *dirghām*, compare I. 166. 12 and my notes thereto. Important for our purpose is the passage I. 113. 19, where the *Dawn* is called the *face* of *Aditi*. Her light (*jyōtiḥ*) is described as imperishable in VII. 82. 10 and is sought from her (IV. 25. 3). This connection of Aditi with light is hardly surprising, as she is the mother of the luminous

Ādityas. So the *vrātās* of Aditi would be the same as her regular movements or periodical appearances (coinciding with the arrival of light)—*vrātās* which the poet would follow, i. e. celebrate with the appropriate ritual.

§ 102. VII. 35 9a :—

शं नो अदितिर्भवतु व्रतेभिः
[शं नो भवन्तु मरुतः स्वर्काः ।
शं नो विष्णुः शशं पूषा नो अस्तु
शं नो भवित्रं शम्भस्तु वायुः ॥]

Trans :—May Aditi be (of the nature of) bliss to us, through her *vrātās*.

NOTES :—Here, a perfectly colourless rendering such as 'laws, or ordinances', is (I admit) possible, though in my view, as Aditi is the mother of the Ādityas or Seven Suns, her *vrātās* are probably the same as the 'laws of movement or luminous tracks' followed by the Ādityas or gods in generals. Besides, the *vrātās* according to the verse are something, the pursuit of which by Aditi herself, brings bliss to her worshippers and so the rendering 'laws or ordinances' though not impossible, has hardly any propriety.

§ 103. X. 65. 8 :—

परिक्षिता पितरा पूर्वजावरी
कृतस्य योना क्षयत् समोकसा ।
यावापृथिवी वरुणाय सव्रते
धृतवृत्पयो महिषाय पिन्वतः ॥

Trans :—Heaven and Earth, extending all round, the Parents, born of old, share a common abode in the womb of *rtā* and having an identical *vrātā* for Varuṇa, pour forth milk and ghee for the mighty one (i. e. Varuṇa).

NOTES :—*Savrate* should mean here 'following (their) joint customary activity or routine', as indicated in the pouring out of milk and ghee for Varuṇa. See 'notes to VI. 70. 3d (§ 80) for a full explanation of 'heaven and earth' being conceived as 'endowed with motion.'

§ 104 X. 66. 9ab :—

यावापृथिवी जनयन्मभि व्रताप
ओषधीर्वनितानि युज्ञिया ।
[अन्तरिक्षं स्वरा पप्रुतये
वशं देवासस्तन्वी ३ नि मामृजुः ॥]

Trans :—They (the Visvedevas) created heaven and earth, the waters, the plants and the holy forest-trees, (putting them) face to face with (their) *vratās* (*abhi vratā*).

NOTES :—The use of *abhi* here is parallel to its use in X. 18. 8: *ūd īrṣva nāryabhi jīvalokām* = “ Arise, O woman, to the world of the living.” The meaning ‘for or in accordance with their several laws’ cannot do, as that would suit *anu vratā* and not *abhi vratā*. So the meaning ‘fixed laws of movement’ or customary activity or *career* only, is suitable, the sense of the whole passage being as follows :—The All-gods created heaven and earth etc., and put them face to face with the *vratās* (laws of movement or customary activity), which had to be followed by them; compare VII. 5. 4 where heaven and earth are said to follow the *vratā* of Agni.

§ 105. II. 23. 6ab :—

त्वं नो गोपाः पथिकृद् विचक्षणम्
तव व्रताय मतिभिर्जरामहे ।
[बृहस्पते यो नो अभि हरो दधे
स्वा तं मर्मर्तुं दुच्छुना हरस्वती ॥]

Trans :—Thou (O Brhaspati) art our protector, the maker of paths, the wise one; we sing with hymns, for thy *vratā*.

NOTES :—Like other gods, Brhaspati has a car (X. 103. 4). He occupies the car of *ṛtā* and drives away darkness, the goblins, breaks open the cowstalls and wins the light (II. 23. 3). Is it not then perfectly natural to take the *vratā* of Brhaspati as his ‘fixed round, journey or passage’ following his triumph over the forces of darkness? [The reference to the evil-doers in *pāda c* is significant in this connection].

OTHER D₈ PASSAGES

§ 106. I. 166. 12ab :—

तद् वः सुजाता मरुतो महित्वम्
दीर्घं वो दात्रमदितेरिव व्रतम् ।
[इन्द्रश्च त्वं त्यजसा वि हुणाति
तज्जनाय यस्मै सुकृते अराध्वम् ॥]

Trans :—That, O Well-born Maruts, is your greatness; your bounty is *extensive* like the *vratā* (dominion or realm) of Aditi.

NOTES :—As one of the main functions of the Maruts is to shed rain, their *bounty is equivalent to their capacity to shed rain* and this may be described as extensive in a *physical sense*, as the epithet *dirgha* suggests. This naturally brings out the character of the *upamāna* viz. the *vrata* of Aditi (realm, sphere or dominion) which *must be vast in a physical sense*—an aspect of the word *vrata* which, I wish, scholars attended to, more carefully.

§ 107. VI 49. 1 :—

स्तुषे जनं सुव्रतं नव्यसीभिर
गीर्भिर्मित्रावरुणा सुन्नयन्ता ।
त आ गमंतु त इह श्रुवंतु
सुक्षत्रासो वरुणो मित्रो अग्निः ॥

Trans :—I praise with (very) new songs, the (divine) host of beneficent dominion (*suvratām*) i. e. Mitra and Varuṇa, graciously inclined (as they are). May they come, let them listen here—Varuṇa, Mitra, and Agni, of benevolent (royal) power (*sukṣatrāsaḥ*).

NOTES :—Mitra, Varuṇa (and Agni) are called the '*suvrata jāna*,' in pāda *a* and '*sukṣatrāsaḥ*' in pāda *d*, the latter epithet being almost a paraphrase of *suvrata*. As *kṣatra* means 'dominion, military power' etc., the meaning of *vrata* is automatically determined to be '*dominion, sway*' etc.

§ 108. I. 83. 3cd :—

[अग्निं द्वयोरदधा उक्थयं वचो
यंतस्तुचा मिथुना या संपर्यतः ।]
असंयत्तो व्रते ते क्षेति पुष्याति
भद्रा शक्तिर्यजमानाय मुन्वते ॥

Trans :—Unchecked he dwells and prospers in thy (i. e. Indra's) *vrata*. To the sacrificer who presses (the Soma), power (becomes) auspicious.

NOTES :—Here the meaning 'dominion' for *vrata* suits very well as, with it is used the verb *kṣeti* (he dwells), giving a regional or local import to the word.

§ 109. III. 59. 3cd :—

[अनमीवास इळया मदन्तो
मितज्ञवो वरिसन्ना पृथिव्याः ।]
आदित्यस्य व्रतमुपलक्ष्यन्तो
वयं मित्रस्य सुमतौ स्याम ॥

Trans:—Abiding within the *vrata* (dominion or sphere) of the Aditya (i. e. Mitra), may we be in the good-will of Mitra.

NOTES:—If we examine all the other uses of the verb *kṣi* with *upa* in the Rv., such as I. 73. 3ab = III. 55. 2lab (*prthivīm ... upakṣeti*), and II. 27. 13 (*apāh upa kṣeti*), it will be seen that the noun in the accusative which it governs, has a *local significance* (=what is dwelt in). So it is proper to take *vratām upa-kṣiyāntaḥ* here, in the same way.

§ 110. X. 36. 13ab :—

ये संवितुः सत्यसंवस्य विश्वे
मित्रस्य ब्रूते वरुणस्य देवाः ।
[ते सौभगं वीरवृद्धोमदप्लो
दधातन् इविणं चित्रमुस्मे ॥]

Trans:—All ye, the gods who (abide) by the *vrata* of Savitr, whose stimulation is true, [who abide by the *vrata*] of Mitra and Varuṇa...

NOTES:—*Vrata* must mean here, the sphere of movement, the region of activity, dominion of Savitr etc., because the next (14th) verse invokes Savitr to confer blessings *from the East, West, North and South, thus showing that his dominion extends in all directions in a physical sense.*

§ 111. VI. 54. 9 :—

पूषन् तव ब्रूते वयं
न रिष्येम कदा चन ।
स्तोतारस्त इह स्मसि ॥

Trans:—O Pūṣan, under thy *vrata*, may we never come to harm ; we are thy praisers *here*.

NOTES:—Here, *vrata* should mean 'dominion, authority, region, sphere' etc. The translation 'in thy service' or 'abiding in thy ordinance' as Macdonell²⁹ (for example) gives, *misses the point*. He himself says in his notes, "c gives the reason for the hope expressed in a b." Then, this means that 'praise' is the qualification mentioned for deserving the assurance of 'security within his dominion' from Pūṣan and 'abiding in his service or ordinance' would be an unnecessary repetition of *stotārah*. Besides *ihā* (here) is *parallel to vrata*.

29. Vedic Reader, p. 114.

§ 112. IX. 102. 5ab :—

अस्य व्रते सजोषसो
विश्वे देवासो अद्भुतः ।

[स्पर्हा भवन्ति रन्तयो जुषन्त यत् ॥]

Trans :—Under his *vrata* (dominion), all the gods are of one accord, free from guile;...

NOTES :—The fact that the *visvedevas* are here referred to, as abiding by the *vrata* of Soma should make it certain that the latter word means 'dominion' 'sway' etc. (and Griffiths³⁰ renders it as 'sway'). Surely the *All-gods* cannot be referred to, as doing *any holy work* or practising any *vow* in honour of Soma !

§ 113. V. 69. 1 :—

त्री रोचना वरुण त्रीरुत यूत
त्रीणि मित्र धारयथो रजांसि ।
त्रावृथानावमर्ति क्षत्रियस्या-
नु व्रतं रक्षमाणावजुर्म ॥

Trans :—Three luminous spheres, O Varuṇa and three heavens and three spaces, O Mitra, do ye (two) sustain, 'increasing the might of the Ruler (*Ksatriya* = Varuṇa) and closely guarding the ageless (or eternal) *vrata*.

NOTES :—Here, I draw attention to the very close association of *vrata*, with *rocana*, *dyūn* and *rajāmsi*. Sustaining the latter was in fact the same as guarding the former *vrata* then must mean the eternal prescribed and circumscribed sphere of activity or routine or realm of the heavenly luminaries extending across the luminous spheres or heavens.

§ 114. IV. 53. 5 :—

त्रिरन्तरिक्षं सविता महिस्वना
त्री रजांसि परिभूस्त्रीणि रोचना ।
तिष्ठो दिवः पृथिवीस्तिष्ठ इन्द्राति
त्रिभिर्ब्रह्मैरभि नो रक्षति त्सना ॥

Trans :—Savitr, encompassing with his greatness the firmament thrice (i. e. the threefold firmament), the three spaces and the three spheres of light, stirs up the three heavens and the three earths, and by himself (or by his own power) protects (all) with the three *vrata*s.

NOTES:—This verse should make it absolutely clear that the *vratās* played an important part in a *spatial sense*, in the cosmology of the RgVeda! The *vratā* or the sphere of activity or movement of the *devās*, (the circumscribed dominion through which the luminaries must move) is threefold, just as heaven, *antārikṣa* etc. are threefold. But this is the peculiar feature of the *vratās*, that non-deviation from them ensures security from the forces of darkness (compare the last pāda).

§ 115. II. 27. 8 :—

तिन्नो भूमीर्धारयन् त्रींस्त यून्
त्रीणि वृता विदथे अन्तरेषाम् ।
अन्तेनादित्या महिं वो महित्वं
तदर्यमन् वरुण मित्र चारु ॥

Trans:—They supported the three earths and the three heavens and the three *vratās* within (i. e. in) their assembly (*vidāthe*). Great is your greatness, O Ādityas, on the strength of *ṛtā*; that (greatness), O Aryaman, Varuṇa and Mitra, is lovely.

NOTES:—For the explanation of *vratās* here, as the region of the movement of the *devās* across the firmament and their threefold division corresponding to the three heavens and earths, see (§ 114) IV. 53. 5. I may add that *ṛtā*, as the source of the greatness and strength of the Ādityas had probably originally a cosmological sense (as the Zodiacal belt); [see V. 63. 7 and I. 65. 2; but especially my notes to III. 4. 7.].

§ 116. VII. 4. 5 :—

तव त्रिधातु पृथिवी उत यौ
वैश्वानर व्रतमग्ने सचन्त ।
त्वं भासा रोदसी आ तनुथा
जक्षेण शोचिषा शोशुचानः ॥

Trans:—Thy threefold *vratā* (dominion), O Agni Vaiśvānara, do heaven and earth abide by. Thou hast overspread both the worlds with lustre, blazing with uninterrupted splendour.

NOTES:—From II. 27. 8 and IV. 53. 5, we see the threefold character of the *vratā* or *sphere of activity* or movement of Agni Vaiśvānara (the Universal Agni or Agni belonging to all men). III. 2. 9 tells us that Agni has one terrestrial and two celestial forms viz. as the Sun and as lightning. The three courses of movement of Agni as the Sun in heaven, lightning in the firmament and the domestic fire on earth, represent the three-fold *vratā* of Agni Vaiśvānara.

§ 117. I. 163. 3ab:—

असिं यमो अस्यादित्यो अर्बुच्च
असिं त्रितो गुह्येन व्रतेन ।
[असिं सोमेन समया विष्टुक्त
आहुस्ते त्रीणि द्विवि बन्धनानि ॥]

Trans:—Thou art Yama; thou art Āditya, O Horse!; thou art Trita, by reason of the secret *vrata*.

NOTES:—In I. 105. 17, Trita is described as set down 'in a well' and in X. 8. 7, as 'inside a pit (*vavrá*)'. Now, whatever view we adopt regarding Trita, whether he was a god of lightning, a moon-god or a deity of the bright sky³¹, it is sufficient for our purpose to note that the 'well' or '*vavrá*' is the 'secret *vrata*' of our passage and thus *vrata* must mean 'a place, abode, station, region' etc.

§ 118. X. 114. 2:—

तिस्रो देव्याय निर्ऋतीरुपासते
दीर्घश्रुतो वि हि जानन्ति बह्वयः ।
तासां नि चिक्वुः कवयो निदानं
परेषु या गुह्येषु व्रतेषु ॥

Trans:—The far-famed gods serve the three *Nirrtis* for guidance; for, well they know (them). The poets have discovered their origin (viz. of the *Nirrtis*) who (abide) in the secret *vratas*.

NOTES:—For *vāhnayah* = gods, compare I. 44. 13 (*vāhñibhir devāih*) and for *destrāya* = 'for guidance or indication (of their future course)', compare X. 85. 15. If the word meant 'poet-priests,' then there would be no point in saying that 'the poet-priests who knew the *Nirrtis* well, have discovered their origin! The correct explanation of the '*guhya vrata*' passages, in my opinion, is this:—The gods (or luminaries) have to wait upon *Nirrti*, the power of darkness and destruction, in the secret or dark regions beyond, for an indication of their journey back to light. I. 117. 5 refers to the Sun sleeping in the lap of *Nirrti* and darkness.

§ 119. IX. 9. 5:—

ता अमि सन्तमस्तुतं
सहे युवान्मा दधुः ।
इन्दुमिन्द्र तव व्रते ॥

31. See Macdonell: Vedic Mythology, p. 69.

Trans:—Those (rivers) have established the youthful unquarable Indu, the overpowering one, for splendour, O Indra, within thy *vrata* (dominion).

NOTES:—IX. 82. 5, tells us that the waters follow the *vrata* of Soma. VIII. 3. 20, says that when Indra drove Vṛtra from the air, fires, the Sun, and Soma (pre-eminently Indra's juice or drink) shone forth. If all these passages are considered together, we shall see the import of our passage. Soma abides in the dominion of Indra and the Rivers follow the *vrata* of Indra. So it could be said that the rivers establish Indu in the dominion of Indra when they follow Soma. There is here, as often in the Rv., a mix-up of descriptions of Soma in his celestial and terrestrial aspects !

PASSAGES IN WHICH EITHER OF THE TWO MEANINGS, D₂ OR D₄, IS SUITABLE

§ 120. VIII. 41. 7 :—

य आस्वत्क आशये
विश्वान् ज्ञातान्येषाम् ।
परि धामानि मर्मुशद्
वरुणस्य पुरो गये
विश्वे देवा अनु व्रतं [नमन्तामन्यके समे ॥]

Trans:—He who lays himself down on *these* (āsu), as a garment, considering their (i. e. of the gods) creations and abodes; the All-gods (direct themselves) in accordance with (their) *vrata*, in the home, in front of Varuṇa.

NOTES:—The verse is obscure. I merely state my own interpretation of it, as a discussion of all the difficulties is unnecessary for our limited purpose. 'These' (āsu) are in my opinion, the *kṣāpah* (nights) which Varuṇa is said to have embraced in V. 3, or the *Waters*. The description of Varuṇa lying down like a 'garment' is, suggestive of the derivation of Varuṇa from the root *var*, to cover. This, in my view, is a description of the long darkness of the night, when the gods moving along their respective paths which now become secret or dark (Cf. *gūhyeṣu vrataṣu*, § 118), are under the charge of Varuṇa. *Vrata* thus means the fixed individual path or routine of each god.

§ 121. I. 22. 6:—

अपां नपातमवसे
सवितारमुपं स्तुहि ।
तस्य व्रतान्युश्मसि ॥

Trans:—For help, praise Savitr, the child of Waters; we long for his *vratās*.

NOTES:—I. 35. 11=“Those ancient pathways of thine, O Savitr, dustless and well-made in the atmosphere (or mid-region),—with those path-ways, easy for movement, *protect us* and *bless us*.” This verse is almost a commentary on the word *vratāni* in our verse which should mean, therefore, the paths of Savitr or his *fixed movements* in the *antārikṣa*.

§ 122. II. 38. 9:—

न यस्येन्द्रो वरुणो न मित्रो
व्रतमर्यमा न मिनन्ति रुद्रः ।
नारातयुस्तमिदं स्वास्ति
हुवे देवं सवितारं नमोभिः ॥

Trans:—Here, I invoke with salutations, for my welfare, god Savitr, whose *vratā*, neither Indra, nor Varuṇa, nor Aryaman, nor Rudra miss, nay, not (even) the evil spirits (miss).

NOTES:—What exactly the *vratā* of Savitr may be, can be gathered from some other verses of this hymn; v. 2c says, ‘even the waters or Rivers submit to Savitr’s *vratā*.’ Now from I. 101. 3 we know that the waters follow the *vratā* or path cut out for them by Indra; v. 3d says:—The night has arrived in accordance with the *vratā* of Savitr. So then the *vratā* of Savitr is either his round or fixed movement in the heavens or the pathway for the luminaries which Indra (or Varuṇa) has laid out for them but which is described here as the *vratā* of Savitr which Indra and Varuṇa do not miss!

§ 123. VIII. 41. 10ab:—

यः श्वेतां अधिनिर्णिज-
श्चुके कृष्णां अनु व्रता ।
[स धाम पुर्व्यं ममे यः स्कम्भेन वि रोदसी
अजो न धामधारयन्नभन्तामन्यके ममे ॥]

Trans:—(Varuṇa) who has turned the white (*śvetān*) robed Ones (*ādhinirmajāḥ*) into dark ones (*kṛṣṇān*), in accordance with the *vratās* (i. e. heavenly paths or fixed movements, followed by him)....

NOTES:—This is an obscure passage and I am alone responsible for the above rendering. I take the *śvetān ādhinirmijah* to be the same as the *śvetā vicakṣanā* of verse 9 i. e. *the white or shining rays*. Varuṇa has the power to plunge the bright world into darkness or turn days into nights; compare IX. 73. 3c: *mahāh samūdrām Vārūṇastirō dadhē* = V. has concealed the sea of light³² or v. 3 of the present hymn where V. is described as 'embracing the nights'. My view of *vratā* is not affected, however, by the uncertainty of the passage because the unmistakable general trend of this verse is that in accordance with the *vratās* or periodical movements followed, the white ones i. e. rays are turned into dark ones or *vice-versa* by Varuṇa.

§ 124. II. 2. 8cd:—

[नमः पुरा ते वरुणोत नूनम्
उतापरं तुविजात ब्रवाम ।]
त्वे हि कं पर्वते न श्रितान्य
अप्रच्युतानि दृळभ व्रतानि ॥

Trans:—For in thee, O unconquerable (Varuṇa), all *vratās* are grounded, as on a rock.

NOTES:—I have here given deliberately the translation of Max Müller³² with the exception of his rendering 'laws' for *vratāni*. It cannot be denied that this colourless rendering is *not wrong* but it is so very vague and needlessly so, in view of the fact that we know that it was Varuṇa who dug out the paths for the Sun and Dawn and other (heavenly bodies or) gods (VII. 87. 1) and laid down the *vratās* or *laws* (of movement) across heaven for them. The *upamā* also suggests preferably, though not conclusively, the meaning 'routine or tracks' which are laid in Varuṇa as securely as tracks on a rock or mountain.

§ 125. II. 5. 4:—

साकं हि शुचिना शुचिः
प्रज्ञास्ता क्रतुनाजनि ।
विद्वौ अस्य व्रता ध्रुवा
वया इवानु रोहते ॥

32. *Mahāh* is Gen. Sing. of *māh* = (heavenly) brilliance or light; see my paper, 'Apropos of *māh rūye*' in Bull. D. C. R. I. Vol. II. 3-4.

33. Vedic Hymns: SBE. Vol. XXXII, p. 238.

Trans:—For, along with the bright *krātu* (power of mind or sacrifice) has been born the bright *Praśāstrī* (i. e. Agni); the man who knows his (i. e. Agni's) eternal *vratās*, mounts upon them as on the branches of a tree.

NOTES:—Here a verb of motion (\sqrt{ruh}) is used with *vratā* and the simile suggests that the *vratās* were originally the heavenly routes of the gods (the celestial form of Agni being one of them) having their counterpart in the *laws of movement* or fixed rounds followed by the terrestrial Agni, in the course of the sacrificial ritual which was more or less an imitation of the movements of the celestial bodies in heaven. Following the high-placed *vratās* was, as it were, 'mounting upon them'.

§ 126. I. 90. 2:—

ते हि वस्वो वसवाना
स्ते अपमूरा महोभिः ।
व्रता रक्षन्ते विश्वाहा ॥

Trans:—They (i. e. the *Viśvedevas*), the masters of wealth, the unerring, always guard the *vratās* by their powers (or splendours³⁴).

NOTES:—In my view, *vratās* here, may well be the 'laws of movement of the *devās*' or their 'fixed luminous tracks' which have to be guarded with 'splendours' from the forces of darkness and evil and which the gods have to keep or protect by *not deviating* from them.

§ 127. VIII. 48. 8ab:—

सोमं राजन् मृळया नः स्मृति
नव स्मासि व्रत्यास्तस्य विद्धि ।
[अलृतिं दक्ष उत मनुयुरिन्द्रो
मा नो अर्यो अनुकामं परा दाः ॥]

Trans:—King Soma! be merciful to us with welfare; we are attached to thy *vratā* (*tāva vratyāḥ*); know of that;.....

NOTES:—The usual *vratās* or fixed movements of the terrestrial Soma (while it is pressed by the stones, flows through the strainer into the vats and is then offered to the gods on a litter of grass or into the fire or drunk by the priests) as well as of the celestial Soma [who runs through heaven across the spaces with his stream (IX. 3. 7)] are here alluded to. Devotion to them means 'honouring or accompanying them with the appropriate ritual and prayers'.

34. For my view of *māh* (and also *māhas*) as meaning '(heavenly) splendour' more often than 'might,' see my article on '*mahó rāye*' in Bull. D.C.R.I. Vol. II. Nos. 3-4.

§ 128. I. 91. 3ab :—

राज्ञो नु ते वरुणस्य व्रतानि
बृहद् गभीरं तव सोम धाम ।
[शुचिद्वसंसि प्रियो न मित्रो
दक्षायो अर्यमेवासि सोम ॥]

Trans :—Thy *vratās* are (the same as those) of King Varuṇa. High and deep, O Soma, is thy splendour ;

NOTES :—According to the Rv., Soma is not only a terrestrial plant but is also celestial (X. 116. 3). He is a *rajastūr* or traverser of space (IX 48. 4), and runs through heaven across the spaces with his stream (IX. 3. 7). So his *vratās* i. e. *vratās* followed by him are, indeed, the heavenly paths or laws of movement (followed by the gods and) laid down by Varuṇa for the Sun (I. 24. 8; VII. 60. 4; 87. 1). etc.

§ 129. IX. 61. 24 :—

त्वोतासुस्तवावसा
स्याम वन्वन्त आसुरः ।
सोम व्रतेषु जागृहि ॥

Trans :—Protected by thee, and with thy help, may we be victorious over the evil spirits ; be awake to the *vratās*, O Soma. -

NOTES :—The point is, whose *vratās* are these? In my opinion, they are the *vratās* of Soma, if we take into the account the general trend of *vratā*-usages in the RgVeda. So the translation 'watch at our solemn rules³⁵' is hardly correct. As to the *vratās* of Soma in his celestial and terrestrial aspect, see notes to VIII. 48. 8 and I. 91. 3. The appeal in the last pāda to Soma, to be awake to his *vratās*, so that the worshipper may triumph is very appropriate in the light of IX. 53. 3, which tells us that they (i. e. Soma's *vratās* or advances) are unchallengeable and IX. 35. 4 which says that 'Indu seeking to win and stimulating strength, discovers the *vratās* and the weapons.'

§ 130. IX. 73. 3 :—

पवित्रवन्तः परि वाचमासते
पितृषां प्रत्नो अभि रक्षति व्रतम् ।
[महः संमुद्रं वरुणास्तिरो दधे
धीरा इच्छेत्कुर्धरुणेष्वाभम् ॥]

35. Griffith, Hymns of the RgVeda, Vol. II, p. 308.

Trans:—Equipped with *pavitras* (the purifying strainers), they (the priests) sit round the Song; their ancient Father guards the *vrata* (of Soma).

NOTES:—The 'ancient Father' is, in my opinion, Agni (the First Priest) in whom is centred the fixed ritual procedure or the various movements through which the Soma must pass. Here we find an earthly version of the heavenly *vrata* of the luminaries or *devās* including the celestial Soma.

§ 131. In X. 150. 3cd, Agni is invoked to 'bring hither the gods who are *priyā-vrata*.' Here, the old prejudice regarding *vrata* that it is always something to be observed by mortals is responsible for translations like 'whose laws we (!) love.' The epithet should rather mean here 'who love to follow their *vratās* (i. e. paths or the laws of movement prescribed or laid out for them by Varuṇa or Indra).' It is only in this way that we can appreciate the epithet *purōhita* in its original sense, an epithet so characteristic of Agni and varied (in X. 110. 11b), by the epithet '*purogāh*': placed (or going) in front, as the leader of the gods going along their prescribed routes.

§ 132. *Adabdhā-vrata-pramatih* is an epithet of Agni in II. 9. 2a and means literally 'superior-minded owing to (or and of) unbroken *vratās*.' The context is: Agni has sat down on the *Hótr*'s seat as the *Hótr*. The epithet then refers to Agni's unerring occupation of his own peculiar seat viz. the seat of the *Hótr* and the consequent reputation for 'superior-mindedness' which he has made for himself among human worshippers. Here, *vrata* must therefore mean 'the laws of movement or periodical visits to the worshipper's home' or 'the paths to the sacrifice, (not missed by him).' Oldenberg⁸⁶ proposes very plausibly, a separation of the compound as *adabdhavratāh prāmatih*. This does not affect our view.

PASSAGES IN WHICH EITHER OF THE TWO MEANINGS, D₂ OR D₃, IS SUITABLE

§ 133. I. 31. 2 :—

त्वमेग्रे प्रथमो अङ्गिरस्तमः
कविर्देवानां परि भूषसि व्रतम् ।
[विशुर्विश्वस्मै शुवनाय मेधिरो
द्विमाता शयुः कतिधा चिदायवे ॥]

Trans:—Thou, O Agni, the first, the highest Āngiras, a sage, dost invest (with beauty) the *vratā* of the gods;.....

NOTES:—It has been made abundantly clear that the *vratā* of the gods is a concrete thing viz. the fixed path-way of the gods which is in heaven. Agni, by going along it as a messenger, beautifies it. If, however, we take the root *bhūs* (an extended form of *bhū*) with *pāri* as meaning 'to envelope', then the 2nd pāda: ('Thou dost envelope the *vratā* or *dominion* of the gods') would be equivalent in sense to V. 13. 6ab: "Thou O Agni, dost surround (*paribhūh*) the gods, as a felly the spokes". In favour of the first meaning of that root, compare III. 55. 1 and for the idea, compare VII. 75. 3. The kindling of Agni into a blaze takes place at the arrival of the Dawn when immediately the *vratā* (or *vratās*) of the gods begin to operate.

§ 134. I. 101. 3 :—

यस्य यावापृथिवी पौंस्यं सहद्
यस्य व्रते वरुणो यस्य सूर्यः ।
यस्येन्द्रस्य सिन्धवः सञ्चति व्रतं
मरुत्वन्तं सुख्याय हवामहे ॥

Trans:—Whose great manly vigour is (expressed in the form of) heaven and earth and under whose *dominion* (*vratē*), (abide) Varuṇa and Sūrya; whose (*vratām*) *dominion* the rivers follow; him in the company of the Maruts, we invoke for friendship.

NOTES:—As regards *vratē* in pāda b, the only natural meaning is 'jurisdiction,' 'special sphere of influence' etc. As for the rivers following the *vratā* of Indra, compare II. 12. 3 and 12 (which tell us that Indra killed the *āhi* and released the seven streams), VII. 47. 4ab. [= (The *Sindhus*) whom Sūrya has overspread with his rays and for whom Indra has dug out a path (*gātum*).] and also III. 33. 6. In VII. 47. 3, the waters are said to go along the path of the gods and not missing the *vratās* of Indra. So the *vratām* in pāda c = *gātū* or *pāthah* i. e. fixed path or paths.

§ 135. II. 38. 2c :—

[विश्वस्य हि श्रुष्टये देव ऊर्ध्वः
प्र बाहवां पृथुपाणिः सिसृति ।]
आपश्चिदस्य व्रत आ निमृश
[अयं चिद् वातो रमते परिज्मन् ॥]

Trans:—The waters, verily cling to his (i. e. Savitr's) *vratā*.

NOTES:—V. 46. 7c speaks of goddesses who reside in the *apām vratā* i. e. the *vrata* or *dominion of the waters*. I. 101. 3 tells us that the rivers followed the *vrata* of Indra and according to X. 111. 3 Indra makes a path for the sun. There are any number of passages, indeed, in which Indra is described as producing the dawn and the sun. With the liberation of the waters by Indra, is connected the winning of light, sun and dawn; so 'dominion' as well as 'path or paths' will both be suitable meanings for the word.

§ 136. X. 57. 6:—

वयं सोम व्रते तव
मनस्तनुष बिभ्रतः ।
प्रजावन्तः सचेमाहि ॥

Trans:—May we, O Soma, holding our mind within (our) bodies (i. e. ourselves) and blest with progeny, move along (i. e. abide by) your *vrata* (i. e. path).

NOTES:—The verb *sac* is *one of motion*. The first verse of this hymn which says "May we, as Soma-pressers, not move away from the path (*patháh*), from the sacrifice," is a commentary, as it were, on *vrata* in our passage. It also shows how *vrata* though originally meaning 'path, procedure, fixed course or movement in the Soma ritual' etc., came to mean 'the ritual or sacrificial procedure or sacrifice itself.' *vrata* can also here mean: 'dominion, sway, sphere, region etc.'

§ 137. IX. 86. 37cd:—

[इंज्ञान इमा भुवनानि वीर्यसे
युजान इन्दो हरितः सुपर्णः ।]
तास्तै क्षरन्तु मधुमदधृतं पयसु-
तव व्रते सोम तिष्ठन्तु कुष्ठयः ॥

Trans:—May they [i. e. the 'Seven Sisters' of the preceding verse or (which is the same thing) the 'well-winged Mares', mentioned in the preceding *pāda*] pour out for thee *ghṛtā*, rich in mead and milk; may the folk abide within thy *vrata*.

NOTES:—The word may be interpreted here as meaning 'dominion, sway, jurisdiction' though it should be noted that the meaning 'beat, route,' 'march, advance or visit' is also possible as the first hemistich speaks of 'Soma passing through the worlds, harnessing the well-winged mares.'

A PASSAGE IN WHICH ANY ONE OF THE MEANINGS, D₂, D₅ OR D₁, WILL SUIT.

§ 138. *Puruvratāh* in IX. 3. 10, as an epithet of Pavamāna Soma 'who generating food, while being born, flows on in a stream' means (in my opinion) 'one whose paths or ways are numerous'. We have already had so many passages in which reference is made to the *vratās* which Soma follows in the various processes to which it is subjected. Incantations are sung over the tangible Soma while it is pressed by the stones, flows through the woolen strainer into the wooden vats and is finally offered on a litter of grass as a beverage. Corresponding to these *vratās* of Soma as a terrestrial plant, are those of the celestial Soma when the Pavamāna Soma is described as 'running through heaven across the spaces with his stream' (*dhārayā*), as in our passage (IX. 3. 7). The meanings 'exploits, deeds, performances' or 'passages, movements' are also equally suitable.

PASSAGES IN WHICH ANY ONE OF THE MEANINGS, D₃, D₂, D₄ OR D₅, WILL SUIT.

§ 139. The five *mahi-vrata* passages in which the compound is an epithet of Soma (IX. 87. 7; 100. 9), of Agni (I. 45. 3; X. 115. 3.) and of Varuṇa (VI. 68. 9), and the one in which the allied *mahā-mahivrata* qualifies Soma (IX. 48. 2), need not be examined in detail. Suffice it to say that the sense 'of great [mighty or resplendent (*māhi*)] *dominion* [sway, sphere or jurisdiction (*vratā*)] suits the context every case. Even the sense 'paths, tracks or routes' or 'regular movements', would not be objectionable, as all the three deities are associated with *vratās* which they have either laid out for the luminaries as in the case of Varuṇa or which they follow themselves in heaven (in their celestial form) or on earth (in their terrestrial aspect). The sense 'exploits, deeds, performances' also is admissible, though rather vague.

THE THREE (3) PASSAGES IN WHICH THE MEANING D₆ IS SUITABLE.

[D₆=Arrangement, ordinance, law of behaviour, rule or code of conduct laid down by a divinity].

§ 140. II. 38. 7 :—

त्वयां हितमप्यमप्सु भागं
धन्वान्वा मृगयसो वि तस्थुः ।
वनानि विश्वो नकिरस्य तानि
व्रता देवस्य सवितुर्मिनन्ति ॥

Trans :—The watery (creation) (has spread itself) over the portion assigned (to it) by thee, in the waters; the beasts have spread themselves over dry land; the woods (are) for the birds; none misses those *vratās* of god Savitr.

NOTES :—The meaning 'ordinances' in the sense of 'the spheres of life-activity or movement prescribed by Savitr' for the birds, the beasts etc., suits here very well. I accept here, the usual explanation of *vratā*. That this is one of the three passages (out of more than 200 *vratā* passages) where the sense 'ordinance, law' is suitable should be noted. [I have, however, my own view of the meaning of *vratā* as 'customary activity' here and my own theory of the general import of the verse which it is not proper to discuss here. I shall only mention it briefly. The appearance of Savitr is the signal for the blocked-up Rivers to flow (II. 38. 2c) and the light to spread all over the universe. Thus, the watery creation, the beasts and birds come into their own when Savitr's *vratā* or *customary activity* comes into play. No one can escape his beneficent influence.]

§ 141. X. 10. 5 :—

गर्भे नु नौ जनिता दंपती कर
देवस्त्वष्टां सविता विश्वरूपः ।
नकिरस्य प्र मिनन्ति व्रतानि
वेदं नावस्य पृथिवी उत रौः ॥

Trans :—Even in the womb, did the Creator, the god Tvastṛ the Vivifier, the Omniform one, make us a couple. None misses his *vratās*. That we are *his*, heaven and earth know.

NOTES :—Here *vratā* means 'the ordinance or arrangement or law laid down by Tvastṛ for others.' Here also, the connection of the word with the root *vr̥t* is unmistakable.

§ 142. X. 33. 9 :—

न देवानामतिं व्रतं
ज्ञात्वा च न जीवति ।
तथा युजा वि बावृते ॥

Trans :—Not even he, who has a hundred lives, lives beyond (i. e. contrary to) the *vrata* (ordinance) of the gods; thus have I parted from my friend.

NOTES :—*vrata* here signifies the, 'act or ordinance laid down by the gods regarding the longevity of human beings'. [Even here the original sense of *vrata* lingers. He who dies passes, as it were, into the region of darkness or the unconsciousness (of death) and thus goes beyond the brilliant *dominion* (*vrata*) of the gods.]

H₁ PASSAGES

[H₁ = Physical activity, practice, behaviour, way of life, customary activity, profession, vocation etc. of human beings].

§ 143. IX. 112. 1abcd :—

नानानं वा उ नो विषो
वि व्रतानि जनानाम् ।
तक्षा रिष्टं हतं शिषम्
ब्रह्मा सुन्वन्तमिच्छती-
[न्द्रायेन्दो परि स्रव ॥]

Trans :—Various, indeed, (are) our thoughts and diverse (*vi*) are the *vrata*s of us-men; the carpenter seeks (something) cracked, the physician (seeks) some one injured, the brahmān (or Brahmin) seeks a (Soma—) presser.....

NOTES :—Here, in its application to humanity, the word means 'profession, vocation, way of life,' etc. or 'mode of behaviour' (the classical Sanskrit: *vartana*). Compare v. 3 where *nānādhiyah* (which sums up the first pāda of our verse) occurs in nearly the same context. This verse as well as X. 166. 4 show that *vrata* is a *physical activity*, sharply distinguished from mental activity (*dhi* here, and *cittam* in X. 166. 4).

§ 144. X. 166. 4 :—

अभिभूरहमार्गमं विश्वकर्मेण धाम्ना ।
आ विश्वत्तमा वो व्रतम्
आ वोऽहं समितिं ददे ॥

Trans :—(All-) surpassing, have I come, with all-effective lustre ; (here) have I taken (control of) your mind, your *vratā* and your assembly.

NOTES :—As shown under IX. 112. 1, *vratā* is here distinguished from *cittām* (mind) and denotes physical activity, movement, conduct etc. as distinguished from mental activity.

H₂ PASSAGES.

[H₂ = The whole range of those peculiar, ethical and religious duties and practices which made up the culture-pattern of the Aryans i. e. the *Aryan cult* as such.]

§ 145. X. 65. 11 :—

ब्रह्म गामश्च जनयन्त ओषधी
र्वनस्पतीन् पृथिवीं पर्वतां अपः ।
सूर्यं दिवि रोहयन्तः सुदानव
आर्या व्रता विश्वजन्तो अग्नि क्षमि ॥

Trans :—They, the bountiful ones, created *brāhman* (prayer), the cow, the horse, the plants, the earth, the mountains and the waters, raising the sun to heaven and ushering forth (into existence), Aryan *vratās* on earth.

NOTES :—This is a very important passage, referring to the sum-total of the social and religious duties of Aryans or the *ethical pattern of Aryan Culture* in the words "*āryā vratā*". The original sense of *vratā* viz. 'pathways or dominion, lines of expansion or movement, prescribed duties or activity' is not lost sight of, in the figurative one of '*Aryan ways of life*'. *Vratā* was the culture-pattern of the Aryans as distinguished from the *dāsya*us.

§ 146. From three '*anyā-vrata*' passages, we get an idea of what the *vratās* of men or Aryans were. From VIII. 70. 11, we learn that the *dāsyu* is *anyā-vrata*, inhuman, godless, non-sacrificing, and deserving of punishment. Evidently then, *vratā* represents the

religious and ethical code of the Aryans. *Humanity, faith in Aryan gods and sacrificing* are some of the articles of this religious and ethical creed of the Aryans. X. 22. 8 describes the *dāsyu* similarly, as *anya-vrata*, inhuman, thoughtless, *akarmān* (i.e. riteless, inactive or evil-doer) and facing (the Aryan poet as an adversary). From V. 20. 2, we infer that the *anya-vrata* belongs to the opposite i.e. anti-Aryan camp, and is one, to whose trickery and hatred are offered as victims (cf I. 25. 2), those, who in the arrogance of their increased might, do not care to promote (the offering of prayers or oblations to) Agni. So the worship of Agni was one of the *vratās*.

§ 147. The following *avratā* passages throw more light on Aryan *vratās*. I. 101. 2: [Pipru called an *Asura* as well as a *Dāsa* is conquered by Indra, for or with *Ṛjīśvan* who offers Soma to him]. This Pipru is called an *avratā*.

I. 51. 8: The *avratā* conflicts with him whose grass is strewn and is differentiated from the *yājamaṇa*, the sacrificer; by implication he belongs to the category of the *Dasyus* as opposed to the *Aryas*.

VI. 14. 3: Men (*āyus*) conquer the *Dasyu* (or foe), who is by implication described as an *avratā*, overpowered by means of *vratās*. I. 175. 3: The *Dasyu* is an *avratā* (also in IX. 41. 2), opposed to *mānus* or man (*Aryan*, of course).

From I. 130. 8, we gather the following information conveyed directly or through implication and suggestion:—The *avratā* is an enemy of the sacrificing Aryan, of *Manu*, has a dark skin, is thirsty (or covetous) and harmful.

IX. 73. 5:—The *avratās* here stand for the *dark skin* which Indra hates i.e. the *dark-skinned non-Aryans*, who whether in heaven or earth are to be expelled. In four passages the *avratās* alone are mentioned and though it is possible to take them as the black sheep among the Aryans, the whole trend of the description shows that the non-Aryans are really meant.... Thus I. 33. 5 tells us (by implication) that the *avratās* who were hurled down by Indra from heaven and earth were *non-sacrificers* competing with the *sacrificers*.

I. 132. 4 refers to the irritable *avratā* as brought under *subjection* to those who press the Soma juice. IX. 73. 8 says that the hated *avratās* are cast into the pit, by Soma Pavamāna, the guardian of *ṛtā*. Finally VIII. 97. 3 tells us that the *avratā* is a godless person who sleeps to his heart's content.

§ 148. From the almost complete picture (negative, though) of the mental and moral make-up of the '*non-observers of vratās*', that

is presented to us so vividly in the foregoing *anyā-vrata* and *a-vratā* passages, we can easily infer what the *vratās* of the Aryans were:—Faith in (Aryan) god(s), strewing the sacred grass (for them), pressing the Soma juice and offering it to Indra, offering and promoting oblations to Agni, winning the favour of Soma Pāvamāna (by the appropriate ritual), the offering of sacrifices and the performance of rites (in honour of the different gods)—these (we might say) were the religious *vratās*. On the ethical side, absence of irritation, laziness, inhumanity, thoughtlessness, evil-doing, hatred, trickery and arrogance were the distinguishing marks of the Aryan observers of *vratās*.

H₃ PASSAGES IN WHICH THE DUTIES OF THE POET-PRIESTS ARE HINTED AT.

[H₃=The specific (social and religious) duties of each of the three upper classes of Aryan society].

§ 149. VII. 103. 1 :—

संवत्सरं शशयाना ब्राह्मणा व्रतचारिणः ।

वाचं पर्जन्यजिन्वितां प्र मण्डूका अवादिषुः ॥

Trans :— The frogs, having lain for a year, like Brahmins practising their *vratā*, have uttered forth their speech inspired by Parjanya.

NOTES :—The indirect reference in v. 8th of this same hymn, to Soma-pressing Brahmins, who raise their voice in offering their yearly prayer, along with the *Adhvaryus*, who, busied with hot milk (in the *Pravargya* ceremony) sweat and in v. 7 to Brahmins who at the *Atirātra* Soma sacrifice speak around the lake-like vessel filled with Soma, makes it certain that *vratā* here refers to a definite ritual procedure or Vedic recitation fixed for a particular day or season of the year after a long holiday. Here we have the sense of *vratā* in its application to the duties of the Brahmins or the priestly class in particular.

§ 150. III. 59. 2ab :—

प्र स मित्रं मर्तो अस्तु प्रयस्वान्

यस्त आदित्य शिक्षति वृतेन ।

[न हन्यते न जीयते त्वोतो

नैनमहो अश्नोत्यन्तितो न दूरात् ॥]

- *Trans* :—May that mortal having sacrificial food (to offer to thee), O Mitra, be pre-eminent, (the mortal) who pays homage to thee, in accordance with (thy) *vrata*.

NOTES :—Here, *vrata* is the ritual act or procedure or performance peculiar to a particular occasion in the Mitra-ceremonial and consists in offering sacrificial food to Mitra—a duty devolving chiefly on the priestly class.

§ 151. I.93. 8abc :—

यो अग्नीषोमां हविषां सपर्याद्
देवव्रीचा मनसा यो धृतेन ।
तस्य व्रतं रक्षते पातमंहसो
[विशे जनाय महि शर्म यच्छतम् ॥]

Trans :—Guard the *vrata*, protect it (i. e. the *vrata*) from evil, (the *vrata*) of him who serves Agni and Soma with oblations, with a godly mind, or with *ghṛta* (melted butter).....

NOTES :—It is quite clear that *vrata* here means 'the sacrificial procedure' or 'the ritual performance or acts' of the priest—the worshipper. It consists of the offering of *havis* and *ghṛta* to Agni and Soma with a devoted mind.

§ 152. I. 136. 5defg :—

तमर्यमाभि रक्षत्यजूयन्तमनु व्रतम् ।
उक्थैर्य एनोः परिभूषति व्रतं
स्तोमैराभूषति व्रतम् ॥

Trans :—Aryaman protects him who goes straight along the *vrata*, who adorns the *vrata* of the two (i. e. of Mitra and Varuṇa) with lauds (and) who celebrates the (same) *vrata* with his songs of praise.

NOTES :—Here, *rjūyāntam* (going straight) should leave no doubt that the first word: *vrata* means 'path' in a figurative sense i. e. 'the path of correct sacrificial procedure in honour of Aryaman'. The second word: *vrata* must mean the fixed, periodical (or seasonal) round or appearance of the two gods in heaven or their presence at the place of worship synchronizing with and celebrated by means of some sacrifice or ritual of which the recitation of *ukthās* and *stōmas* is a vital part.

§ 153. I. 128. 1abc :—

अयं जायत मनुषो धरीमाणि
होता यजिष्ठ उशिजामनु व्रतमग्निः स्वमनु व्रतम् ।

[विश्वश्रुष्टिः सखीयते रयिरिव श्रवस्यते ।
अदब्धो होता नि षददिलस्पदे परिवीत इळस्पदे ॥]

Trans :—(Agni) the *Hótr*, the best sacrificer, was born (after the usage) of *Mánus*. in accordance with the *vrata* [ritual procedure] of the *Uṣṣ*gs (mythical priests)—Agni (was born) in accordance with his own *vrata* (procedure).

NOTES :—Here *dhārīmani* is clearly equivalent to the first *ānu vratām*, both meaning 'in accordance with the settled procedure or usage.' The second *ānu vratām* refers to the fixed manner or routine of Agni's birth. There is, in this verse (as in the preceding one I. 136. 5), a play on the word and the employment of it in its two phases: divine and human. We learn from this verse, how very specialized the *vratās* or duties of the priestly class had become. The *Uṣṣ*gs had their own distinctive mode of ritual procedure regarding the production of fire.

§ 154. From VIII. 13. 19, a verse to Indra, we know that the *ānu-vrata* (one devoted to *vratās*) is a praiser of Indra *who offers lauds (ukthās) at the right time or season*. V. 4a of the hymn to the *Aśvins* (I. 34), (in which the continual play on the word 'three' was probably occasioned by their appearance at the three daily sacrifices) speaks of the three daily rounds or visits of the *Aśvins* to the *ānu-vrata* and thus suggests that the *ānu-vrata* pays ritual homage *thrice daily to the Aśvins*. We thus get information regarding the *vratās* of the priests in honour of Indra and the *Aśvins*.

H₃ PASSAGES IN WHICH THE DUTIES OF THE RULING CLASS ARE HINTED AT.

§ 155. X. 60. 4 :—

यस्यैक्ष्वाकुरुषं व्रते
रेवाद मराय्येधते ।
दिवीव पञ्च कृष्टयः ॥

Trans :—In whose *vrata* (dominion), prospers *Ikṣvāku*, rich and bright, as the Five tribes in heaven.

NOTES :—Here *vraté* which refers to a human king is parallel to *divī (iva)* = '(as) in heaven' and must have therefore a *spatial* sense. Our meaning 'realm, region, sphere, dominion,' etc. therefore suits very well. We can also construe it in a figurative sense as '(under

whose) auspices or regal authority.' Incidentally, the passage hints at the duties of the ruling class of Aryan Society. That those subordinate to him must be in a prosperous condition, is the chief responsibility of a ruler. This meaning of *vrata* is nothing else but the human version of meaning D₃ (which see).

§ 156. *āpa-vrata* passages:—I. 51. 9ab, tells us that Indra subjects the *āpa-vratas* (those averse to *vratas*) to the *ānu-vrata* (i. e. one who is loyal to his *vratas*), and V. 42. 9 notes two characteristics of the *āpa-vratas* viz. their ingratitude to the poet-priests on whom they do not bestow even a part of the wealth which they really owe to their *ukthās* and their hatred of *brahman* (which I should take as *brahmān* = the Brahmin or the priest). The implication of this passage is that the members of the ruling class, the patrons and rich men generally, could only be said to be doing their duty if they bore feelings of gratitude to the priests to whose prayers they owed their prosperity and if they bestowed handsome *dakṣiṇā* on them.

§ 157. *svvrata* passages:—We now take up passages where the word '*svvrata*' is not exactly an epithet of any god but qualifies either the *sūri* (the patron of the priests) or the *rājan* (a ruler in general whether divine or human). From I. 125. 7, we gather that the Rv. poet prayed for the *sūri*, the institutor of sacrifices (at which the poet-priest officiated) who was a *svvrata*—a liberal donor. In I. 180. 6cd, the *sūri* is compared to a *svvrata*, the substance of the passage being as follows:—The patron (or institutor) of the sacrifice who pleases and feeds (people), wins for himself strength like a *svvrata*. The upshot of the two passages is that among the duties (religious and social) of the institutors of sacrificers who generally were Kings and belonged to the military order, figured prominently the duty of making generous donations to the poet-priests. In IX. 20. 5, Soma is described as 'entering into (i. e. inspiring) the Songs (cf. VII. 103. 8ab), while being purified like a ruler who is a *svvrata*.' In IX. 57. 3, Soma is described as 'taking his seat, while being polished by men like an elephant—king who is *svvrata*.' From both these passages, it becomes clear that *beneficent dominion or authority or sway (vrata)* is the characteristic of an ideal ruler, whether of the *divine, human or animal world*!

§ 158. *The H₄ passage*:—In the Hymn of the Gambler, X. 34. v. 2cd speaks of the 'abandonment by the gambler of (his) wife who was *ānu-vratā* (devoted), for the sake of a die too high by one'. *vrata* here, means *duty in general* and an *ānu-vratā jāyā* is a *dutiful wife*.

AN INDEX OF *ṚGVEDIC* PASSAGES, CITED, TRANSLATED,
DISCUSSED OR REFERRED TO, IN THE FOREGOING
MONOGRAPH.

[The references are to Sections (§).]

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24	8	37,128	84	12	65,66
24	10	27,37,86	90	2	126
24	15	85	91	3	128,129
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63	2	16	164	41	75
65	2	13,34,115	166	12	51,101,106
69	4ab	81	175	3	147
70	1cd	96	183	3	1,9
73	3ab	109	186	3cd	157

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20	2	146	69	4	37,72
40	6	21	72	2ab	53
42	9	156	80	4	2,14,72,83,98
45	7,8	98	83	5	80
46	7	51,135	83	7b	38
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31	11	72,72,88	82	1	101
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18	6,10	81	44	21	19
23	19 c	19	47	9	45
25	3	45	48	8	99,127,129
25	16	82	48	9 cd	99,100
25	17	52	67	13	76
32	28	64,65,66,67	93	3	29
40	9	23	94	2	29,37
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12	4	99	73	5	147
15	4	48	73	8	147
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35	6	55	96	7 d	48
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